NAPOLEON
AND HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

GERTRUDE ARETZ

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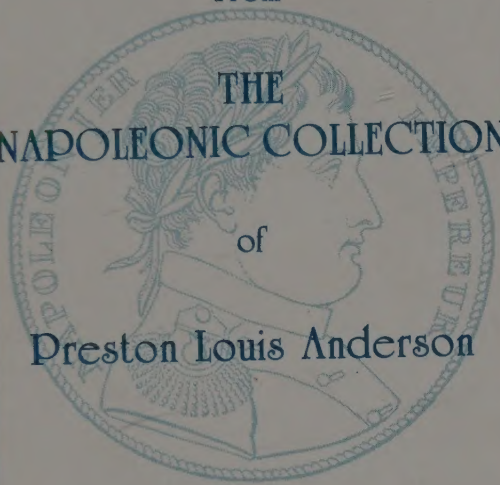

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NAPOLEON
AND
HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

ANATOLE FRANCE HIMSELF

By JEAN-JACQUES BROUSSON

Translation and Foreword By John Pollock

"Including even Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* I know of no record of a great author which is more vivid, more entertaining, and more helpful in the light it throws upon the author's personality and writings than this volume."

—*Ernest Boyd in the N. Y. Saturday Review.*

RAMBLES WITH ANATOLE FRANCE

BY SÁNDOR KÉMERI

(MME. GEORGES BÖLÖNI)

Translated from the Hungarian by Emil Lengyel

"Sándor Kémeri may well be envied for her tour through the great galleries and over the famous historical sites with Anatole France. Wherever France passed, the scene called for rich episodes out of the storehouse of his memory."

—*Harry Hansen in the N. Y. World.*

NAPOLEON IN CORONATION ROBES
After a painting by Regnault

NAPOLEON
AND
HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

BY

GERTRUDE ARETZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

PHILADELPHIA
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CONCERNING THE TITLE OF THIS TRANSLATION

The English version of *Die Frauen um Napoleon* was announced by the publishers as *Napoleon and the Fair Sex,* which seemed the best idiomatic rendering of the German title. Not until the translators came to prepare the bibliography did they discover that the chosen English name had been pre-empted for a translation (now out of print) for Ferdinand Masson's *Napoleon et les femmes.* Another equally comprehensive and unobjectionable title was not easy to find, and some will deny that the one ultimately selected is either the one or the other! The "fair sex" certainly includes Madame de Staël and Queen Louise of Prussia and Madame de Rémusat, as well as Giuseppina Grassini and Marie Walewska and Betsy Balcombe—but the members of the former trio were Napoleon's friends only in a Pickwickian sense. We must console ourselves with the reflection that a man's "women friends" are not always his best friends, and must at times be regarded as his "most intimate enemies." The title will do—at a pinch.

PREFACE

Men of mark must be handled in the same way as questions of primary importance. The study of them must be pursued into the most secret recesses of their intellectual and emotional life. Though in general the historian and the biographer are concerned with tracing such men's influence upon their own time and upon subsequent generations, none the less the desire is widespread to learn their human peculiarities and weaknesses. People want to know them through and through; to learn their tastes and their passions, their faults and their vices as well as their merits and their virtues—for by these lights their actions can be more accurately appraised. The private life of a great man is public property, for the public shares in his sorrows and his joys, feels with him in his hours both of happiness and of unhappiness. We picture him in his home life, as husband and father, as lover and friend. Here is a man whose brain sketched titanic plans, whose mind was ever full of brilliant schemes for conquest, whose creative energy wore out his contemporaries. Is it not natural that we should ask ourselves how he reacted to the stresses of the tenderest, the noblest, and the most powerful of all our feelings—how he reacted towards love? What was his attitude to women? Was he brutal, despotic, unfeeling? Was he gentle, considerate, delicately sensitive? Or was he weak, submissive, irresolute; was he woman's slave?

These questions have an added interest in the case of such a man as Napoleon: the hero upon the field of honour; the most brilliant of all military commanders; the able statesman, the sagacious legislator, and the indefatigable worker. In his duplex nature, all contradictories were combined. This hardy warrior, this strict and ambitious ruler, was not insusceptible to human feelings and passions. As a young lieutenant, and later, in the years of his prime, he was inclined to repudiate love; none the less love held sway over this mighty spirit, and filled his heart

with its bitter sweetness. Though he was fond of saying, "Love is not for me, I am not like other men," there were many women with whom he entered into close relationships. It is true that he differed from other rulers in that he never had an officially acknowledged mistress; but through the private apartments of Saint-Cloud and the Tuileries there moved a number of lovely odalisques who came to receive the homage of the pasha. All these lighter relationships were, however, transcended by his intense passion for Josephine. It was his passion for Josephine which, at the outset of his victorious career, spurred the young hero on to his glorious deeds. For her sake he won battles, conquered towns and countries. With the fires of this passion he enheartened the poor, ragged soldiers of the Army of Italy, so that, impelled by the volcanic energy of their commander, they rushed down over the Lombard plain like a stream of lava. In the end, nevertheless, he sacrificed this passion on the altar of ambition. In fulfilment of the inexorable demands of his policy, he needed to found a dynasty; he must wed an emperor's daughter, a girl sprung from the ancient race of the Habsburgs, a young and vigorous woman who could give birth to an heir.

All the same, I have not limited myself to the study and depiction of Napoleon's love affairs. It was not my aim to do nothing more than drag a few spicy stories of court life into the open day. I wanted to show forth this man in his general relationships with the world of women, whether these women were mistresses or wives, friends or foes. I wished, with a woman's eyes, to judge his relationships towards women.

In actual fact, there were but few women whose ties with Napoleon were on a purely intellectual plane. For that reason, writers have seldom troubled to consider this aspect of his life, which has merely been touched upon in the special biographies or other works dealing with women of note who came into contact with the Emperor of the French. With the aid of all the available material, I have been able to give an exhaustive account of the women with whom Napoleon entered into intimate and affectionate relationships. While I was studying these matters, many

new data naturally attracted my attention, relating to other notable women whose paths crossed those of Napoleon the Great. On the other hand, I have ignored casual intimate relationships, such as could only have been alluded to by one wishing to write a scandalous chronicle. Oftentimes, indeed, it has been far from easy to phrase my narrative in such a way as to avoid offending delicate susceptibilities.

I hope the reader will not misjudge my design. Having to do with a man quite out of the ordinary, I have endeavoured to avoid partisanship, and have not been able to share the outlook of those who regard Napoleon as a tyrant and a brute, as one who would gladly have deprived women of all their dignities and all their rights. To me, Napoleon was a man, a ruler, a genius, and a worker, to whom the feminine element was an indispensable part of life; but one who never lost his head over a woman, one who was always supreme over his own passions, one whose most beloved mistress was the State. He was a man who overthrew thrones and set them up again, a man before whom princes and peoples trembled; but at the same time he was one who could readily be influenced by a soft voice, a tender word, a gentle caress, the glance of bright eyes, the utterance of a pretty mouth, the sparkle of a tear. Nevertheless I shall show that at his court, where there was no lack of handsome, seductive, and clever women, no woman ever played a notable part.

GERTRUDE ARETZ.

INTRODUCTION

NAPOLEON AND LOVE

"What is love?—The sense of his own weakness, with which an isolated human being is soon permeated; at the same time, the sense of impotence. The heart contracts convulsively, it expands, it beats more powerfully—sweet tears of delight flow. That is love."

Such were the words of the young Napoleon. Full of Rousseauist ideas and of youthful enthusiasm, when wandering through Dauphiné in the year 1791, on a grey February day, he recorded his opinions on love, a passion to which as yet he was almost a stranger.

He was writing about platonic love. But he was even less sympathetic towards purely physical love. His friend Lieutenant des Mazis in the La Fère regiment, gave him plenty of reasons for saying what he thought about this matter. Des Mazis was in love, could think of nothing but his mistress, was always talking about her, and could see no one but her in the world. Bonaparte treated his friend as a sick man. The illness was troublesome, and Napoleon tried to cure Des Mazis with doses of reason. The ultimate outcome of the daily conversations was the *Dialogue sur l'amour*, in which the author categorically declared: "I regard love as injurious to society and as destructive to the individual's personal happiness; I believe that it does more harm than good. We could thank the gods if the world were quit of it!" In his *Lettres sur la Corse*, he fiercely exclaims: "O Love, destructive passion, scourge of youth, what hast thou done!"

To his immaturity, love seemed debasing—something ruinous to nations and morality. There was only one kind of love which earned his approval, the love of country. The island of Corsica was all in all to him. He lived for Corsica, and was willing to die for Corsica. The Romans of old, and the Spartans, had known what true patriotism was. But the weaklings of the eighteenth century were

willing to be ruled by weaklings whose only merit was that they were beautiful. How contemptible! He could hardly find words strong enough to express his indignation. "A nation given over to the worship of women has not even energy which would enable it to grasp that there are patriots in the world!"

When the revolution made headway in France, when all the patriots were intoxicated with the passion for liberty and were swept away by the current of new ideas, whilst women, and especially women of the upper class, continued to support the old regime (with its refined but not conspicuously moral ways), Napoleon could not master his contempt for women. "The women are royalists almost without exception. No wonder for that, seeing that Liberty is fairer than they, and eclipses them."

Are these utterances in harmony with the nature and the behaviour of the man who thus spoke and wrote? In his prime, he had many mistresses, and was twice married. But there is no inconsistency. Even to the mature Napoleon, woman was never anything more than a pastime, and a passing need. When he wanted rest and recreation, he found these in the society and the tenderness and the love of woman; and when it suited his ambition or his political plans, woman became a means to his ends.

He did not know woman, but only one woman, Josephine. Perhaps he did not know even her through and through, for she was a most accomplished actress. As for all the other women whom he came into close contact with and possessed, they were nothing more than temporary necessities, the caprices of a ruling prince, policy, or chance.

No woman ever played a leading part at his court. No reigning beauty ruled there like Diane de Poitiers at the court of Henry II, or like Montespan at the court of Louis XIV, or like Pompadour at the court of Louis XV. Indeed, Sainte-Beuve tells us that Pompadour was the last of the royal mistresses worthy of the name. Nor had Napoleon a Lola Montez, like Louis I of Bavaria; or an Aurora von Königsmark, like Augustus the Strong. "Women must never be allowed to play a part at my

court," he once said to Madame de Rémusat. "They will hate me in consequence; but at least they will leave me in peace. . . . Women did much mischief to Henry IV and Louis XIV. My position is a far more critical one than was that of either of those rulers. Since their days, the French have become stricter in such matters. They would not forgive their sovereign were he to make a parade of his love affairs, or to flaunt his mistresses before their eyes."

The Emperor was right. A Napoleon could not allow himself the liberties which other princes could take without risk. A man of so outstanding a character could not stoop to allow love intrigues to encroach upon his life. At his court, women were merely ornamental; they formed a decorative setting. It was for decorative purposes that he encouraged the most beautiful, the most elegant, and the most distinguished of women to enter his circle. Never were the royal palaces of France more thronged with grace, beauty, splendour, and youth than in the days of Napoleon. Under the First Empire, extravagant luxury was the fashion; men and women were decked with gold and jewels. When the Emperor's sisters and sisters-in-law appeared in public, the cost of their dresses and their gems had to be measured in hundreds of thousands of francs.

At the courts where women held sway, at that of Louis XIV for instance, the tone was light and frivolous. At Napoleon's court, seriousness was the order of the day. We might almost speak of it as a moral court. The members of the court circle had not been corrupted by luxurious living or the sophisticated enjoyments of high society. The time between the ninth Thermidor and the establishment of the Consulate had been too short for the general relaxation of discipline to work havoc in the new society. The leading women of the Consulate and the Empire were natural and unspoiled. Their simplicity and naïvety sometimes conflicted with the demands of court etiquette but were genuine and not assumed. Their elegance, their youth, and their charm mitigated the reserve demanded by the Emperor—who was sometimes inclined

to push this demand to an extreme. Perhaps the society of Napoleon's court lacked the mobility and vivaciousness which had been so characteristic of the old regime; but, in compensation, it was more natural and more moral—which does not mean that love affairs were unknown!

Napoleon thought that women hated him. This was not so, but they were all more or less afraid of him. On public occasions he would sometimes throw them into a condition of helpless embarrassment. At court receptions, every lady present dreaded the moment when the Emperor would speak to her. He would pay her roughly worded compliments upon her dress, or would proclaim her love affairs to the world. This latter was his way of improving the moral tone at his court. A young unmarried girl might expect to be asked how many children she had. As for recently married women, he would enquire of them in how many months they expected to be confined. Elderly ladies would learn that the Emperor did not think they had many years more to live. If, on introduction, a woman seemed to him ill-favoured, he would burst out with: "Mon Dieu, Madame, I was told you were good-looking!" In a word, he was utterly lacking in the gift for amiable flattery; he had not the talent for which his brother Lucien was especially noted, the talent for agreeable trifling. Should a lady appear in his presence unrouged, he would blurt out before the assembled company: "Madame, go home and make up a little; you look just like a corpse!" Or: "Why are you so pale? Have you just had a baby?" No one will deny the brutality of such questions and remarks.

Yet this man, who was so cruelly blunt before the public, who regarded love as a destructive emotion, who seemed to despise women, had a passionate temperament, a heart that craved for love. He wrote ardent and affectionate love letters. The man who maintained that love was nothing more than crazy hopes was consumed with longing in Italy when he was vainly waiting for Josephine to join him. In the Syrian desert, he knew all the pangs of jealousy when he learned that his wife had been unfaithful to him.

Josephine! She was the only woman to whom his heart was wholly given; she was the only one who had an influence over him. He loved her, notwithstanding the difference in their ages. Sometimes his feelings towards her were jealous and harsh; sometimes they were tender and trusting. She understood him as no other woman did. She tolerated all his caprices with amazing patience, and never failed to conquer him by her kindliness or her tears. Napoleon's own words about her were: "I was never in love with any woman except Josephine." There were, indeed, other women, such as Countess Walewska, Mademoiselle George, Madame Fourès, Madame Duchâtel, and Carlotta Gazzani, who enjoyed his favour for considerable periods; but not one of them could boast of exercising any influence upon him either in private life or in affairs of State. He remained true to his principle: "The man who lets himself be ruled by a woman is a fool!" Another favourite saying of his was: "A man who cannot staunchly follow the guidance of his own feelings and his own principles, is unfitted for the tasks of war and government; amenability to influence must be left to women."

Are we, then, to say that Napoleon was a tyrant, that he was brutal towards the women with whom he came in contact? Facts are against him, but none the less the answer is in the negative. He was a man; and, despite appearances to the contrary, he was susceptible. A gentle voice, a tender word, or a tear, could arouse sympathetic vibrations in his heartstrings, and he would then betray delicate sensibilities. Writing to Josephine from Berlin on November 6, 1806, he said: "I detest intriguing women; I am used to good and gentle women, and these are the only kind of women I like." Had not Countess Hatzfeld been modest in her demeanour and meek in her approach, she would never have been able to save her husband's life.

It is true that Napoleon was sometimes inconsiderate in his behaviour to Josephine. He made no attempt to conceal his love adventures from her, took no precautions to keep these matters quiet. When he had a new flame, he

would be less affectionate to his wife than usual. But such peculiarities were just—peculiarities, and not the outcome of a brutal disposition. Josephine had merely to shed tears and he was vanquished, for his tenderness knew no bounds. This is very different from the conduct of a really brutal man, who gloats over the sufferings of the woman he hurts. Napoleon was far from being callous. Had he been so, he could not have written in the *Discours de Lyon:* "The feelings are the most intimate bonds of life, society, love, and friendship." He regarded the feelings as the source of all the pleasures of life and all the pains. He considered that only an impotent and unstable man could be incapable of feeling.

But to a man with Napoleon's temperament, even the most trifling manifest domination on the part of a woman necessarily seemed intolerable. In 1806, when he was in Posen, Josephine, tortured by jealousy, wrote him a reproachful letter, upbraiding him because he would not allow her to join him. His reply ran as follows: "Oh you women! You are insatiable. What you want, must happen. For my part, I regard myself as the lowliest slave among men. My master has no heart in his bosom, for my master is the nature of things!"

Yes, that was the only master Napoleon acknowledged, and before this master he had to bow in the end. But neither love nor woman ever had power over him.

In St. Helena, when conversing one day with his fellow exiles, he said, half in jest and half in earnest: "Really we westerners do not understand woman at all. We have spoiled everything by treating her far too well. It was utterly wrong to lift woman up almost to our own level. The orientals managed these matters much better. They declared that woman was man's property; and in very truth nature made woman to be the slave of man. It is only because our views are topsy-turvy that women can claim to be our rulers. They misuse certain advantages in order to lead us astray and to dominate us. For one who inspires us to do good things, there are hundreds who bring us to folly."

In Napoleon's mouth, these utterances were only half-

truths. He merely gave vent to them in order to tease Madame Montholon and Madame Bertrand.

It has been contended that Napoleon was a vicious man, a debauchee. The attempt to maintain this would be unjust. The reader will see in due course whether there is any ground for such a view.

Beyond question Napoleon was not free from weaknesses and faults. He had mistresses; he was faithless to his own marriage bond and failed to respect the marriages of others; he plucked a good many flowers and then threw them away unheeding. Where, however, shall we find anything perfect in this world? He was great enough to be allowed to have faults. But there is a wide difference between faults and weaknesses, on the one hand, and vices and excesses, on the other. His disposition made these latter uncongenial to him, and in his confidential intercourse with women he was backward rather than aggressive. He regarded chastity as women's supreme virtue. "In women," he said, "chastity is what courage is in men; I despise a coward just as much as I despise a loose woman."

A man with these thoughts could not have been so brutal as Napoleon has sometimes been depicted—and is still depicted. In certain cases, doubtless, as in his conduct towards Queen Louise at Tilsit, and in his relationships with Madame de Staël, Madame de Chevreuse, and one or two of the ladies of his court, he was open to criticism. But here we have to do with very different causes than the brutality which has been ascribed to him. He did not like women to interfere in politics; he detested blue-stockings; and he could not bear women with a past, or women who were on the way to acquire one.

"It would be better," he said once to Roederer, "if women were to do more work with their hands and less with their tongues, especially as far as interference in politics is concerned. . . . States are lost as soon as women interfere in public affairs. The France of the old regime was ruined by the late queen. If a woman were to advocate some political move, that would seem to me sufficient reason for taking the opposite course." On

another occasion, in the twenty-ninth bulletin of the Grand Army, which went the round of Europe, he wrote: "The papers discovered in Charlottenburg will prove how unhappy are those princes who, in political matters, allow themselves to be guided by women."

That was why neither the wonderfully beautiful Queen Louise nor the clever Madame de Staël could make any headway with him.

Let us take a just view of the Emperor of the French. Perpetually occupied with his titanic plans, working in his study hour after hour every day, a man of genius whose mind was continually giving birth to new and more fruitful ideas—Napoleon had scant leisure for the study of women and their peculiarities. The fleeting moments during his youth when he may be said to have devoted himself to the theoretical study of woman, did not suffice to make him an expert in this field. Nor could he learn from practice, since he was not a professional seducer. For this, too, time is needed, and Napoleon had no spare time, even in his subaltern days. Work was his natural element! He lacked leisure to cultivate the flattering tongue of the seducer, to make himself intimately acquainted with the elegancies and the subtleties of the amorist's well-stocked vocabulary, with the arts and graces which every woman in love expects from her lover. That is why Napoleon never had a truly devoted mistress.

When he had an hour or two to spare for woman, he spent no time upon deliberation, but went straight forward towards his goal, without circumlocution, and without sentimental feelings. Work and glory were always the first things for him. That is why he had little respect for a feeling which softens the heart and makes people pliable. It may explain the thoughtlessness with which one day he kept the actress Duchesnois waiting half-clad in a cold bedroom, and then sent her home unceremoniously when she ventured to let him know that she was freezing. Perhaps, too, it explains the lack of sensibility with which he would often parade his infidelities before Josephine. He would sometimes tell her his adventures, and would not allow her to complain. "If a man is unfaithful," he

would say, "let him acknowledge the fact without compunction; such things leave no trace on a man. His wife will at first be very much annoyed, but she will forgive him; often she will gain by it. But when a woman is unfaithful to her husband, things are very different. In her case it is useless for her to acknowledge her fault without compunction. Who can be sure that it has left no consequences? The false step cannot be retrieved; and that is why she cannot, must not, behave like a man in such matters. Besides, there is nothing degrading to woman in this difference between the sexes. Each sex has its own possessions and its own duties. Woman's possessions are beauty, charm, the art of allurement; her duties are subordination and dependence." Napoleon was also wont to excuse his lapses by saying: "I am a different man from other men. The laws of morality and decorum do not apply to me."

Nevertheless there were women who laid especial stress on Napoleon's amiability and extolled him for his flattering tongue. For instance, Countess Metternich, writing to her husband the Austrian envoy to tell him how, at a reception in the Tuileries, she had been invited to a seat at the Emperor's card table, said: "He paid me many fine compliments upon my diamond clasp and my gold-brocade dress." Here are General Bonaparte's own words, written from Italy to the wife of the astronomer Lalande: "To spend the night with a lovely woman beneath a beautiful starry sky, seems to me the greatest happiness the world can offer."

Napoleon could certainly play the gallant, but such gallantry was not the core of his disposition. For him, a woman's virtues and merits were concentrated in the notions "housewife" and "mother"; any other talents she might possess seemed to him supplementary, if not superfluous. In this respect, he was Corsican through and through. We may well suppose that his mother's example had confirmed him in such principles. During the twenty-one years of her married life, Letizia Bonaparte had presented her husband with thirteen children; and she had been a most dutiful mother to the eight that had

survived. In his exile, the Emperor spoke of her with pride, with a child's veneration! "She knew how to punish and to reward; and, detesting all our baser feelings, she knew how to nip them in the bud. She would not allow anything but the great and the sublime to approach her children."

His attitude towards women in the matters of domesticity and fecundity explains his divorce from Josephine —after long hesitations. Though he had ceased to love her with the ardour that had inspired General Bonaparte, to the Emperor she remained the only woman towards whom his feelings were strongly moved. Had she given him children, had she brought him only one son, he would have prostrated himself before her as if she had been a saint. He was always a good father to Josephine's children, Eugène and Hortense, and loved them with a father's tenderness. When Hortense gave birth to her first son, Napoleon lavished care and kindliness upon the child. He regarded this boy as the probable heir to his throne, and loved him as a son. There was absolutely no warrant for the gossip that was current regarding the relationships between the Emperor and his step-daughter. The little boy, son of the brother whose education he had provided for out of his lieutenant's pay, was for him the heir of the race, the worthiest scion to propagate his name and his dynasty.

In his view, marriage was the only acceptable tie between man and woman, and he held that the aim of human life was to be married and to have many children. The only exception was himself; he alone had another object in view—world-wide power. Everyone knows that matchmaking was a positive mania with him. Never did any sovereign promote so many marriages at his court as Napoleon. He married off his brothers, his sisters, his generals, his ministers of State, and his high officials. To many of them he would hardly concede twenty-four hours' time for reflection upon the matter. Furthermore, he kept his eye upon the folk whose marriages he had thus arranged. If they had children, especially boys, they could be sure of his continued interest.

But Napoleon had no confidence in a woman merely because she was a wife and a mother. He had little faith in women's fidelity—perhaps because his confidence had been shaken by his own experience with Josephine. Even Marie Louise, although during the years when she was living with Napoleon as his wife she certainly had no love intrigues, had to put up with strict supervision on her husband's part. No man might visit her suite without the Emperor's express permission, and even then several ladies-in-waiting, or at least one, must be present. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that blind jealousy was what led Napoleon to take such precautions. In general, this passion troubled him little, for he had known it only during the early days of his love for Josephine, and perhaps once more in his relationships with pretty Madame Fourès in Egypt. When he learned that General Kléber had become his successor in the fair one's favour, it seemed to him—so Madame Junot tells us—"as if his brain would burst."

No, it was not jealousy that impelled him to keep a strict watch over Marie Louise. When he had married Emperor Francis' daughter, he felt it incumbent on him to avoid any false situations at his court. Not even the semblance of calumny must attach to the Empress of the French, the mother of his son. His experiences during his first marriage had given him a standpoint of his own in the matter of conjugal infidelity, and he was wont to say: "L'adultère n'est pas un phénomène, mais une affaire de canapé; il est tout commun."

He detested everything which, in his view, conflicted with the moral code; and he loathed concubinage, which had become so general during the days of the revolution. In this matter he would make no exception even for Berthier, who was such a favourite with him. Madame Visconti, Berthier's mistress, was never allowed to enter the imperial court, although her birth fully entitled her to the privilege. The doors were likewise barred against Madame Grant, Talleyrand's wife, since she had lived with the minister before marriage. Napoleon was so straitlaced in these matters that he refused to allow a

memorial to be erected to the celebrated Agnès Sorel, a truly great woman, who had done nothing but good to France. She had been a king's mistress!

From woman, Napoleon took what she could give, but he did not surrender himself. Thanks to his peculiar mental characteristics, it was out of the question that his personality should ever become fused with that of any woman. A spiritual community between him and a woman would have been impossible unless the woman had stood at or near his intellectual level. But such a woman would have been of the type he abominated—one of those who, in one way or another, feel themselves superior to the man of their choice, and for that very reason love him more ardently. A Napoleon could not have such a mistress or such a wife so long as he ruled the world. In later days, when ending his career upon the barren rock in mid-ocean, he might indeed have found some such companion to bring consolation; but he made no endeavour to find one, for perhaps he hoped that his wife, the mother of his boy, would come to soothe his last hours. She did not come, and therefore Napoleon was never able to make more than a fragmentary application of the theory he had formulated, when he was a young man, in his *Discours de Lyon*. "Woman," he then wrote, "is indispensable to man's animal organization; but she is even more essential to the satisfaction of his sensibilities. She is his natural companion, created specially for him. Therefore, were it only for her sake, he must win this companion, and be inseparable from her. He must identify himself with her, must pour his heart into hers. Then the two of them, fortified against unbridled lusts, will be better enabled to enjoy the charms of life. The sweetness of this union beautifies the dreams and mitigates the sorrows of life; it diversifies life's joys; and it fertilizes the broad field of the sensations."

Could the man who wrote this be a brute? It was nothing but outward circumstances, nothing but his peculiar position towards the world and towards his fellowmen, which so often made his behaviour to women seem brutal. His restless intellectual activity left him no time

for the refined cultivation of his sensibilities. He was too great to love like a human being, and too small to be loved like a god.

In none of Napoleon's love episodes except his love affair with Josephine can we find any trace of undue sensuality, of strong passion, or of all-forgetting devotion. To this great man who cast thrones down and built them up again, no woman was ever a guiding star. The flames which burned so fiercely in the early letters to the incomparable Josephine resembled the lava that bursts from a newly opened volcanic crater. Red-hot at first, it rushes down the mountain-side in a mighty torrent, but flows more and more slowly as it cools, until at last its fires are chilled.

At the first glance we may be inclined to think that Napoleon had a double personality. In him, great and noble qualities were paired with petty and ignoble attributes. His habits and his tastes were simple, and yet his court life was characterized by almost oriental lavishness. In many matters he seemed unselfish, and yet there was nothing more congenial to him than unrestricted power. He loved solitude, delighted in the untroubled quietude of the philosopher; but he fought his way to a throne—which meant that all his actions, all his feelings, and all his thoughts, must be paraded for public inspection. In a word, he was a combination of contradictory qualities, and is displayed before us in a twofold illumination, so that the reflexes from one of the lights entrance us, whilst the other light throws such deep shadows that we shiver.

Let me say with renewed emphasis that even though woman played a subordinate part in the life of the great Emperor, still, he was neither brutal nor tyrannical nor dissolute in his relationships with the fair sex. He was, indeed, hard; for he never lost sight of the goal towards which he was striving: but he was neither a bad man nor a rough one. His character was much too strong for him to be a bad man. The very mistresses whom, when he was pressed for time, he would order to undress and wait for him in the bedroom, bear witness to this. Mademoiselle George writes: "The Emperor has been accused of being

rough and brutal. A calumny, like a thousand more! . . . To me, at any rate, the Emperor was gentle, jolly, yes jolly as a child. In his company, the hours passed unnoticed, and the coming of day often took us by surprise." Another woman, Ida de Sainte-Elme, wrote a few years after Napoleon's death: "There has been much talk about his impetuosity, which was said to be tantamount to brutality. Nothing but hatred and envy can misjudge him like this. Granted, he was not a great gallant; but his gallantry was all the more alluring because it was so different from other men's. It pleased because it was peculiar to him. He did not tell a woman she was beautiful, but he enumerated all her charms with an artist's delicacy of appreciation."

Napoleon was subject to all human passions and feelings. Wonderful must have been the make-up of a being who could coldly do much that to others seemed inhuman, and could remain all the while accessible to the charm of an amiable and tender woman, amenable to the influence of a courteous word. But this sensitive Corsican disposition was under the sway of that insatiable ambition which is an inborn impulse in those predestined to rule. In such natures, ambition thrusts into the background qualities which would otherwise have come to the fore.

EARLY LOVE AFFAIRS

NAPOLEON AND HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHERRY ORCHARD NEAR VALENCE. AN ADVENTURE IN THE PALAIS-ROYAL. FLIRTATIONS AT AUXONNE

Napoleon in his subaltern days was not always the unsociable young officer that most of his biographers describe, either with the purpose of emphasizing the peculiarities of his disposition, or else with that of discovering in him one fault the more. There was a time when he neither withdrew from social life nor gloomily shunned the amusements of his comrades. Although sometimes he did indeed renounce the relaxations they permitted themselves, this was rather owing to his limited means than to his character. He was very short of funds. His pay as lieutenant was eight hundred francs a year; he had two hundred francs pension as an ex-student of the Paris military academy; and he had a supplementary allowance of one hundred and fifty francs for lodging expenses. Thus, a total sum of one thousand, one hundred and fifty francs per annum had to suffice for all his needs. It will be obvious that Napoleon had very little to spare for those additional disbursements that are expected from an officer. His poverty was obvious in his clothing, which was shabby and neglected. His appearance contrasted very much with that of most of his well-born comrades in the La Fère regiment. The few pence he had over when he had paid for the barest necessities of life were devoted to the purchase of books in preference to making his uniform smarter.

None the less, even at Valence, his first garrison town, he entered into social relationships. At first he was shy, somewhat melancholy, wholly immersed in his books and in thoughts of home and family. But by degrees he became more expansive. His small, slender, and elastic figure, with his yellow, parchment-tinted face, and his serious grey eyes, gave him a resolute aspect which contrasted strangely with the timidity of his disposition. As was usual in the Bonaparte family, his head was much too large for so small a body, but this head displayed the most perfect purity of line. The forehead was high and beautifully moulded; the nose was delicately arched, with sensitive nostrils; and his mouth, when he smiled, had an irresistible charm. In his gaze flamed all the storms which agitated his passionate interior. When he spoke, the fires that glowed within seemed to suffuse this strange personality; and his speech was seldom fluent enough to express all that he felt.

He was so reserved, so self-restrained, that those who met him for the first time in society might well fancy him to be a misanthrope, a hypochondriac, one who had no interest in anything beyond his profession and his books. But the externals of this apparently misanthropic and suspicious Corsican hid sensibilities which could manifest themselves at the slightest touch. His genuine temperament was venturesome, and responsive to the slightest stimulus. By nature, he was a combination of opposites, and could pass in an instant from intense enthusiasm to chill reserve.

Three great passions dominated the young officer: love of country, family affection, and a veneration for Rousseau. His family, his Corsica, and the Genevese philosopher, filled his thoughts. A lad of seventeen who was already burdened with the cares of his family had little room in his mind for woman. As yet, he did not know women. From Corsica he had brought with him memories of his mother Letizia, his grandmother Saveria, his aunt Geltruda, and his old nurse Camilla Ilari. As if through a grey mist, he saw the image of his little playmate Giacominetta, about whom the boys and girls of Ajaccio

NAPOLEON'S MOTHER
After a painting by Gérard

had so often teased him. In imagination he could still hear them singing:

Napolione di mezza calzetta
Fa l'amore a Giacominetta,

as they had been wont to sing mockingly when he, with all the gravity of a grown man, used to stroll up and down with her in front of his home.

That had been long ago. The little girl was dead. At Brienne and in Paris he had been subject to a school discipline almost as strict as that of a monastery, and all his time had been given to his work. But already there was a change. The bodily exercises imposed on him by his military service were good for his health. Although his professional studies absorbed most of his time and energy, he was able to enjoy the freedom his position as an officer gave him. He was a young man before whom the doors of society with its distractions were opening for the first time. He made the acquaintance of his fellows, gradually losing his shyness and throwing aside his suspicions.

The Bishop of Marbeuf, brother of the sometime governor of Corsica and a patron of the Bonaparte family, introduced Napoleon to Monseigneur de Tardivon, abbé of Saint-Ruff. In the abbé's hospitable house, he entered a circle of amiable women and girls. The young lieutenant was presented to Madame Grégoire du Colombier, to her daughter Caroline, to Mademoiselle de Laurencin, to Madame and Mademoiselle Lauberie de Saint-Germain, and to other ladies.

Madame du Colombier, a woman in the fifties, "a worthy dame" as the *Mémorial de Sainte-Helène* tells us, was acute enough to perceive the merits of this young man, at once so shy and so self-possessed. She was one of those brilliant and able women of whom Rousseau says that "their interesting and reasonable conversations do more to form a young man's character than pedantic books or the wisdom of the schools." Napoleon pleased her by his acquirements and his sagacity, which distinguished him markedly from most young fellows of his age. His demeanour was serious; at times he would be

lively and impulsive, but at other times timid and reserved; always extraordinarily sensitive and impressionable. His modes of expression, his Corsican accent, his opinions (which were much in advance of his years)—combined to make him interesting. Furthermore, women were naturally inclined to sympathize with this melancholy youth who was devoured by home-sickness.

Madame du Colombier often invited Napoleon to her country seat, Basseaux, seven or eight miles from Valence. Napoleon always walked there, having no money to spare for carriage hire. At Basseaux he could mix with the best society of Valence, for Madame du Colombier's salon was regarded as one of the most elegant of the neighbourhood. She mothered young Napoleon, and gave him plenty of excellent advice. For instance, somewhat later, when the revolution began, she said: "Don't join the émigrès. It is easy enough to get away, but it may be very difficult to return." Napoleon's rejoinder was that he would rather earn a marshal's staff from his own people than from foreigners.

Lieutenant Bonaparte was in the heyday of his youth. Despite his repudiation of love, the longing for sympathy, for tenderness, was germinating in his heart. Madame Colombier had a daughter, a girl of about his own age. In the Basseaux orchard, the June sun was ripening the first cherries. Napoleon's imagination was filled with the heroes of Rousseau's romances, and he chose them as prototypes. Like them, he plucked the bright red fruit, that he might pop it between Caroline du Colombier's bright red lips. We can fancy how, like the heroes depicted by the Genevese philosopher, he whispered: "Oh if my lips were but cherries!" It was the first sentimental movement of this youth towards woman, though still timid and hesitant.

The town of Valence possesses Caroline's portrait. Her large dark eyes, her abundant black hair, her delicate transparent skin, and her virginal lips (perhaps a trifle too thick), produce an impression of kindliness and charm, though she could not be called a beauty. Not even an emperor need be ashamed of having had such a girl

for his first love. Let us picture Napoleon, clad in his artillery officer's dark uniform, with his lean face which seemed to be all eyes, close beside her, beneath the old cherry-tree with its gnarled trunk. The man who, only a few years later, was to become master of France was now enjoying his first love idyll in the company of this charming girl, whose vision comes down to us across a century with all the freshness and poetry of the spring. In the Emperor's memory, likewise, she was to live on with a fresh and poetic aroma. On gloomy days in St. Helena, he would often think of his joyous and innocent youth, and of how he and Caroline du Colombier had eaten cherries together. "We used to make assignations," he would say to the companions of his exile. "Especially do I remember one in summer at daybreak. You'll hardly believe me, but we found all our happiness, on this occasion, in eating cherries together."

Napoleon was not the young woman's only admirer. Three of his fellow-lieutenants, De Menoir, Raget de Fontanille, and Hermet de Vigneux, wooed Caroline's favour and sought her in marriage. In the end, Captain Garembel de Bressieux, who had served in the Lorraine regiment, became her husband.

Rumour has it that Bressieux cut out Bonaparte. This is absurd. Bressieux did not marry Caroline until March 31, 1792, six years later than the idyll of which we are now speaking, and when Napoleon had already left Valence for the second time. During his second stay in the neighbourhood, he saw Caroline du Colombier again, but she no longer possessed her erstwhile charm. The cherries, it seemed, were less good than of yore. Caroline was fancy-free when, a year later, she became De Bressieux's wife. Besides, would a jilted lover have behaved as the Emperor did? He appointed Madame de Bressieux, née Colombier, one of his mother's ladies-in-waiting; and her husband became Chief Administrator of Forests. In 1810, De Bressieux was created an imperial baron.

Neither Caroline nor any other woman had occasion to regret the fact that in youth her path had crossed Napoleon's. All those who had been gentle and kindly to him

in early days could be sure of his gratitude. Even when he had had good reason to complain, the memory of a friendly glance or an affectionate word would make him excuse all else. He never forgot the acquaintanceships of his subaltern days, and was always glad to speak of them frankly when occasion arose. Read, for instance, a letter written from Boulogne Camp on August 20, 1804, in answer to Caroline, who had reminded the now famous and powerful man of their early days together, and had sought his interest on behalf of her brother. Here is the prompt answer:

> Madame, I was delighted to get your letter. I have always had agreeable memories of you and your mother. I shall take the first possible opportunity of being serviceable to your brother. I see from your letter that you live near Lyons, and I have good reason to reproach you because you did not pay me a visit while I was there, for it would have given me great pleasure to see you. Rest assured that it will be my invariable wish to do anything I can for you.
>
> Pont de Briques, 2, *Fructidor, Year XII.*
>
> Napoleon.

A year and a half later, he passed through Lyons on his way to Italy, for the coronation, and saw Caroline once more. What a disappointment! The change in her outward appearance was amazing. Napoleon tells us that she was "furieusement" different. The Duchess of Abrantes, who did not think much of Caroline's looks, does her the justice of saying that Madame de Bressieux was both clever and good, and that her manner was equally distinguished and pleasing.

There is no evidence that Napoleon ever thought of marrying Mademoiselle du Colombier; and, in view of his extreme youth at the time of his first acquaintance with her, it is unlikely that he had ever entertained the idea. His relationships with Caroline were those of a pastoral idyll in the cherry season. It was no more than an episodic dream, and this was inevitable in Napoleon's case. He was a man of action, and was not born to dally with love. That was why the flirtation was soon over. Had he married Caroline it is likely enough that, instead of making war with princes and peoples, he would have become a worthy country gentleman! It was not his mis-

sion to sow the fields in the French countryside, but rather to scatter his great ideas far and wide, that the winds might carry them all over the world, for them to strike root everywhere.

During the days of Napoleon's friendship with Caroline du Colombier, the young lieutenant was simultaneously paying court to Mademoiselle Mion-Desplaces, a fellow-countrywoman, and to the fascinating Mademoiselle de Lauberie de Saint-Germain. For their sake he had taken dancing lessons at Dautel's, but Napoleon had not been gifted by the terpsichorean muse. The Valence dancing master had as little success with his pupil as had the Parisian teacher at the military academy before him. Napoleon remained thoroughout life a poor dancer. In especial, he found the waltz difficult to perform. The first turn set his head spinning. When in 1809, for the sake of his bride, Marie Louise (whom he knew to be passionately fond of the waltz), he tried once more to win a semblance of proficiency in the art of dancing, he provoked great merriment among the ladies, Queen Hortense of Holland and the Crown Princess Stephanie of Baden, who had undertaken the task of teaching him. His movements were so grotesque and awkward! At last Stephanie gave it up in despair, crying: "Enough, Sire, you have quite convinced me that you have always been a bad learner. You were created to impart learning, not to acquire it."

But Napoleon enjoyed taking part in a contra-dance, even in his maturer years as Consul and Emperor. When, in 1808, Dautel, the dancing master, fell upon evil days, he had the happy thought of applying to the Emperor and expressing himself thus wittily: "Sire, the man who helped you to take your first step in the world now recommends himself to your generosity." Napoleon's answer is not on record; but Dautel was appointed controller of taxes.

Mademoiselle de Saint-Germain, to whom Lieutenant Bonaparte is also supposed to have paid his addresses with a view to marriage, gave the preference to her cousin, Monsieur de Montalivet. Emperor Napoleon made this

gentleman prefect of the department of Seine-et-Oise, then director-general of bridges and highways, and ultimately Minister of Home Affairs. He also gave Montalivet the title of count of the Empire, with a donation of eighty thousand francs. Napoleon likewise wished to benefit his erstwhile friend by nominating her to a brilliant post at his court, and in 1806 appointed her lady-in-waiting to Empress Josephine. But Madame de Montalivet declined the honour, being content to play the simpler part of wife and mother. Although the Emperor was not wont to have his schemes rebuffed, he respected the reasons for her refusal, and in spite of it gave her the sinecure position of a lady-in-waiting. He was determined that she should enjoy the emoluments and advantages attaching to the office.

Lieutenant Bonaparte's flirtations with the young ladies of Valence did not leave any scars. The attractions of home and family were stronger than those of love. His longing for his beloved island, where, as he said, he would be able to live once more with his heart, after having had to live so long with his head alone, was appeased when his first furlough came. In the middle of September, 1786, he saw the dear crags of Corsica once again. When the ship drew near to the island, he believed that he could recognize its characteristic aromatic odour. Having reached home, he lived only for his family, giving himself up to reveries and to plans for the future. He showed no trace of being affected by any feminine influence during this long period of leave.

At length, in October, 1787, he was to become more closely acquainted with Paris. Since the letters he had written in the hope of improving his family's pecuniary circumstances had remained void of effect, Lieutenant Bonaparte had made up his mind to knock in person at the doors of the mighty, who held his own fortunes and those of his dear ones in their hands. When a student at the military academy, he had seen but little of the capital. Discipline had been strict, and a cadet was not allowed to go out unless accompanied by a non-commissioned officer.

Now things were altered, and Napoleon Bonaparte could follow his own bent in the great city.

As befitted his modest means, he had taken up his quarters in a simple hostelry in the Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré, the Hôtel de Cherbourg. But his personal endeavours to promote the fortunes of his family were no more successful than his letters had been. People gave him evasive answers, and put off attending to his affairs. He had neither friends nor patrons in Paris, and he waited for good news in vain.

In later days, Napoleon said of Paris, "A woman need only live here six months, and she will know what realm belongs to her." Paris had always been woman's El Dorado. Bonaparte was eighteen years old, and was for the first time (unsupervised) treading the pavements which exercise so irresistible a lure upon young men from the provinces. Here a woman is queen; her aroma fills the air of the boulevards, and is wafted over men and things. The rustling of her skirts sounds like music, as accompaniment to the bright glances of her eyes. There radiates from her a strange and mysterious energy, which intoxicates the newly arrived youth. Woman is everywhere, promenading in the parks and on the boulevards; seated in the cafés and the restaurants, in the theatres and concert halls. Everywhere she plays the leading part.

Napoleon had practically no knowledge of women. In the little garrison town, where everyone knew everyone else, an officer could not allow himself any liberties without being expelled from good society. But now he was in Paris! For the first time the serpent of temptation drew near Napoleon. The charm of the unknown, the craving for knowledge, drove the young man one evening (after coming away from the Théâtre d'Italie) to the neighbourhood of the Palais-Royal, which was at that date the favourite haunt of ladies of easy virtue.

His heart was "shaken by violent sensations," so that for a time he hardly noticed the chill of the November night. But when his ardent imaginings had grown a little cooler, he became painfully aware of the severity of the cold, and took refuge in one of the colonnades. Now his

head was almost turned by the coming and going of the prostitutes and the men-about-town, and by the glare of the restaurants, from which laughter and clamour resounded. He was poor, and could not taste any of these joys. Then his burning glances were attracted by a woman's form. The lateness of the hour, her demeanour, and her youth, showed him instantly that she was one of the unhappy creatures who were patrolling the garden by hundreds. Nevertheless, there was something about her which pleased him. She was more quietly dressed than the others, and less forward in her manner. This helped him to overcome his own timidity. Though "more than anyone else aware of the shame of her profession," though one "who always felt soiled by a glance from such eyes," he accosted her. Writing of the matter afterwards, and wishing to exculpate himself, he said that he was trying to make a psychological investigation rather than to strike up an acquaintance. We feel, however, that he was trembling with eagerness for knowledge; that he wanted to know woman, to solve a riddle. He was taken captive by the unknown.

"You look terribly cold. Why are you walking up and down here in this bitter weather?" he naïvely asked the girl.

"Hope inspires me, Monsieur. I must make a good end to my evening."

She spoke indifferently, and this was a stimulus to the inexperienced young man, who went on walking by her side.

"You look to me very delicate. I wonder that your profession is not too much for you."

The girl found this remark rather strange, and rejoined:

"Diable, Monsieur! One must do something."

"Of course. But can't you find an occupation better suited to your health?"

"No, Monsieur, one must live."

The conversation goes on in this form of question and answer. He wants to know all about her. How she came to adopt her unhappy kind of life, how long she has been

living it, what man drove her into it, whence she has come, how old she is, and so on. Complaisantly but without much interest the girl tells him her story; and in the end his craving for knowledge is stilled in the small and dimly lighted room in the Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré.

Trivial though this adventure may seem, it gives us a comprehensive insight into Napoleon's character. We note his fondness for searching enquiries, which he is not able to repress even on this occasion; and the accuracy with which he jots down everything, even to the minutest details. But we shall be mistaken if we fancy that he records the incident because it made a strong impression on him. He described this casual encounter, far more because it was his pleasure or his principle to describe with the utmost precision every turning-point in his career, than because the experience was momentous to his inner life. His heart was so filled with patriotism, that there was no room there for any other enduring sentiment, even a sensual one. Napoleon's adventure in the Palais-Royal was, in the end, to leave impressions of a very different kind—though a struggle may have been needed before he could get away from the sensual. He wanted to suppress physical sensibilities by superimposing on them the sentiment of patriotism, which to him was the only sentiment worthy of consideration.

Five days later, on November 27th, he composed a monologue on patriotism, dedicated to an anonymous lady. Are we to suppose that this was the fair one of the Palais-Royal? It is likely enough. Paris, with its numberless light women, its thousands of priestesses of Venus, seemed to him filled with the scum of the earth. His inner being revolted against it. How could a corrupt nation, wholly devoted to the pleasures of the senses, still be inspired with patriotism? What a gulf yawned between this modern world and the simple ways, the virtues, and the spiritual grandeur of the Spartans and the Romans of old! Vanished were the days of old, when love of country had been acclaimed as the supreme virtue.—Such was the outburst of a young man of eighteen, whose senses had only just now been fully awakened. We see that love

was not made for Napoleon. Nevertheless we note that there is a conflict. He struggles; he struggles against woman, the snake who encircles him in her coils, who thrusts herself unbidden into his thoughts, who would fain make a fool of him. He invokes Rousseau's arguments to lead him out of temptation, and makes good his escape.

Richer by an experience, but perhaps little better informed than before, Napoleon returned home. Woman had not gained power over him. Debauchery and vice had not taken him prisoner; they did not interest him. Back in Corsica, he led the same retired life as before. But at length his leave expired, and therewith his delightful days at home came to an end.

In the course of the year 1787, the La Fère regiment had been transferred to Auxonne, and Lieutenant Bonaparte rejoined the colours there on June 1, 1788.

In Auxonne market-place there is a Napoleon monument. One of the bas-reliefs shows Bonaparte, in the uniform of an artillery lieutenant, leaning pensively against one of the ancient oaks whose gnarled branches still throw their shade across the road near the Hermit's Well. Napoleon loved this place, where no one came to trouble him, and where nothing was to be heard but the rustling of the leaves and the murmur of the spring. Here he could let his thoughts roam, could give himself up wholly to dreams of Corsica. In a reverie, he would stroll up and down, arms clasped behind, holding in one hand a book, or a few loose leaves of paper on which he could make notes from time to time. Now and again he would stand still, lost in thought, tracing geometrical figures in the sand with the sheath of his sword, and seeming totally lost to the world of everyday reality.

In the hamlet of Villers-Rotin lived a farmer named Merceret, and the young officer often visited this farm. During the summer he took his books and maps there for a time, and did his work there under a huge lime-tree, enjoying the rural seclusion.

Are we to suppose that the tranquillity of the village and the possibility of getting good milk at the farm were

the only things which lured young Bonaparte to Villers-Rotin? Perhaps not. Merceret had a daughter, young, and fresh as the dawn. It would seem that Lieutenant Bonaparte paid shy court to her. He called her his little Marie; and he gave her a silken kerchief and a silver ring—modest tokens of affection which were worth more to the girl than all the treasures that the Emperor of later days could have laid at her feet.

Napoleon's relationships with the coquettish Madame Naudin seem to have been less sentimental. Her husband was war commissary in Auxonne, and Lieutenant Bonaparte was a welcome guest at Naudin's. Rumour hath it that he was even more welcome there when the master of the house was away. This much is certain, that Napoleon corresponded with the lady after leaving Auxonne. He remembered her, too, in later days; and, under the Empire, Naudin was appointed superintendent of Les Invalides.

Marie Merceret and Madame Naudin were not the only ladies with whom Bonaparte made acquaintance during his second period of garrison life. A middle-class girl, Manesca Pillet, likewise attracted his attention. She was step-daughter of a wealthy timber merchant named Chabert, and probably had prospects of bringing a good dowry to her husband, for Napoleon appears to have sought her in marriage. The young lady's relatives, however, doubtless considered that an officer with neither means nor prospects would not be an advantageous match; so matters went no further. He visited the Chaberts a few times only, taking a hand at whist more than once, and on one of these occasions writing Manesca's name on an ivory counter. This solitary proof of an emperor's fleeting passion for a timber merchant's daughter is preserved in the municipal library at Auxonne. The imperial coronet was not to glitter on Manesca's dark tresses. Fifteen years later, Napoleon was to set it upon another head.

We see, then, that the young man's stay in Auxonne was not unmarked by intercourse with the fair sex; and that Coston, the biographer of Bonaparte's youth, is

wrong in maintaining that there is no report of his having had any love affairs while in the town. We may be sure, too, that Napoleon did not play the prude when, in the winter of 1789, his comrades gave a dance for the grisettes of Auxonne; at any rate he took part in it.

Still, we do not think that he can have been seriously in love with any of those whom we have named. At any rate, in the *Dialogue sur l'amour,* written during this period, Napoleon gives utterance to very different opinions from those usual in a lover. He repudiates love, and the happiness supposed to be associated with it. Love is described as a sinister passion. The gods would do well by mankind were they to free the world from it. When his friend Des Mazis, the lover with whom in imagination Bonaparte carries on this colloquy, insists on the happiness he has gained through love, Napoleon rejoins: "I laugh at all the things which hold you captive. Yet more do I laugh at the enthusiasm with which you tell me about them. What a strange illness has seized you! Your nights are sleepless; you cannot take your food; nowhere in the world can you find rest or recreation. Your blood boils. You stride to and fro, your eyes fixed on the horizon. My poor friend, is that happiness? . . . If we were called upon to defend our country, what use would you be? . . . Would anyone venture to entrust State secrets to a man who no longer possesses any will of his own? . . . I lament your error! You believe that love guides you along the road to virtue? On the contrary, love hinders your every footstep. Be reasonable!"

We need hardly be surprised at such sentiments in a young officer whose shoulders were heavily burdened by the cares of his family. He had to live before he could love. When we come to read the passionate letters to Josephine, we shall learn that General Bonaparte held other and less gloomy views than Lieutenant Bonaparte. His heart, thirsty for love, was only awaiting the proper moment to sing a hymn of love with all the more energy and all the more ardour.

But for the time being Napoleon regarded woman from

a purely Corsican outlook, as wife and mother. Family affection was the only love worth thinking about; any other kind of love was a destructive passion. In the *Discours de Lyon* (which treats of human happiness, was composed at about the same date as the *Dialogue sur l'amour,* and is the expression of a like frame of mind) he says: "Without a wife, there can be neither health nor happiness. Let the numerous types of bachelor learn that their pleasures are spurious!" Filled with such principles, he returned to Corsica once more.

CHAPTER TWO

LOUISE TURREAU DE LIGNIERES. DESIREE CLARY

Other storms than those of love were for the moment raging in Napoleon's heart. The torch of freedom had put the spark to the revolution in France. The young son of this revolution, who had nothing but good to expect from the upheaval, eagerly drank in the ideas of freedom let loose upon the world, and became intoxicated as with a draught of heady wine. Women, love, sentimental and philosophical musing over women and feminine peculiarities—all were forgotten. There was only one woman, more beautiful than any other, one alone who possessed him heart and soul: Freedom! Yes, freedom for his unhappy country, his beloved Corsica! It was for her sake that he had become a soldier.

Apart from patriotism, one thing alone obsessed him: ambition. Even though his world were no more than an island, the little place where he was born, he was determined to play his part in it, to bring honour and consideration to his family, to safeguard his relatives' future. Such was now the whole object of his life. Woman had no part in this scheme. He had nothing to expect from woman, and nothing to give her. Neither during his stay in Corsica, nor later in Toulon, have any gallant adventures been recorded of Napoleon. Current events and his profession seem to have monopolized his thoughts and energies.

Not until 1794 do women once more enter Bonaparte's orbit. His years of apprenticeship as a republican lay behind him. The king's artillery lieutenant had become a brigadier-general of the republic. The ninth Thermidor, the day when the two Robespierre brothers fell, had been ominous for him. Because of his friendship for the younger Robespierre, he had been arrested, and brought to Fort Carré near Antibes. His excellent connections and the good name he had among the representatives of the

people helped him to regain his liberty. He was allowed for the nonce to stay with his friend Count Joseph Laurenti in Nice, a house where he had found a home before his arrest.

A friendship was soon struck up between Napoleon and the two daughters and the son of the house. These young people found much pleasure in one another's society. In especial, Bonaparte could not remain indifferent to the youthful charms of the younger girl, Emilie; and his desire to have a home and a more settled future led him to ask for her hand in marriage. Emilie's mother, however, would not give her sanction to the union, although General Bonaparte was not unsympathetic to her. Her excuse was that Emilie, being then only fourteen years of age, was too young.

General Bonaparte had not long to repine over this disappointment. In the following September, he was once more at his old post of artillery general in the Army of Italy: his professional duties claimed him. His demeanour was very different from that of his subordinates, often older men than himself. His orders were never ambiguous. His fiery glance immediately took in the whole of a critical situation; and what he said, went. This superiority was specially appreciated by the two representatives of the people, Ricord and Turreau de Lignières. They were full of enthusiasm for the young general, and took every opportunity of vaunting his exploits.

Turreau, who was himself rather an insignificant fellow, was married to a most charming woman. Towards the end of September, 1794 she arrived with her husband at the headquarters of the Army of Italy, then stationed at Nice. Here Madame de Lignières saw General Bonaparte for the first time. She was the daughter of the surgeon Gauthier of Versailles, and had only been wedded a couple of months. In grace and coquetry the Parisian ladies had nothing to teach her. She was four-and-twenty years old, and as light and sprightly as a butterfly. Small rather than large, brown-haired rather than blond, complexion like ivory, darkly lustrous eyes, red lips made to

be kissed: such was Louise Turreau. Napoleon writes of her as "extrêmement jolie."

Beauty and joy of life were her finest qualities, for she possessed neither intelligence nor virtue. This frivolous lady, whose married life had only just begun, did not take fidelity seriously. The haggard, outwardly unattractive young general, pleased Madame Turreau immensely. She and her husband never missed a chance of blowing Napoleon's trumpet, and this was always to the young man's advantage, for a representative of the people was a person of influence in those days. In later years the Emperor remembered this friendliness, and, speaking to the faithful few who shared his exile in St. Helena, he observed:

"I was very young, and was proud and happy over my little triumph. I therefore tried to show my appreciation by paying them all the attention I could. You will soon see how greatly one may misuse power, and upon how small a thread the fate of men may hang. For I am no better than others. One day I was taking a stroll with Madame Turreau in the vicinity of the Colle di Tenda.[1] Suddenly the thought came to me, 'Why not play a little war game before her very eyes?' I ordered a sortie. Our side came out of it victor—but the affair was too insignificant to be spoken of as an event. The sortie was merely a whim of the moment, yet several men lay dead on the field! Every time I think of this occurrence, I reproach myself. . . ."

For a pair of bright eyes, Napoleon, the great general, sacrificed his men! He, who in later wars kept such careful watch and ward over his "children," his soldiers! Because Madame Turreau was pretty, coquettish, amiable, and seductive, her smiles could not be withstood even by General Bonaparte. Were not hers the first sweet smiles he had enjoyed after years of deprivation? This frivolous temptress had set her heart on conquering him

[1] The Emperor's memory plays him false. It is improbable that the skirmish could have taken place near the Colle di Tenda, for in September, 1794 this pass was no longer contested territory. The incident to which he referred might possibly have taken place when the redoubt "Union," near Vado, was attacked on September 26th.

precisely because he seemed aloof and inaccessible. His deep, sunken eyes betrayed his suppressed passion. His white teeth flashed enticingly from the sun-tanned warrior's face. The lean arms must surely know how to hold a woman in passionate embrace. Louise Turreau was athirst for the touch of Bonaparte's thin lips, and he was not as reluctant as appeared to outward seeming. He was a man, and he seized his opportunity when it came.

Did Napoleon in very truth offer up the lives of a few poor devils for her sake? And if the incident really happened, was it simply to gratify a vain wish to please the lady? One who knows Napoleon's character cannot fail to have doubts on the matter, and to ask whether, after the lapse of so many years, the Emperor may not have made a mistake when recalling the affair. Madame Turreau herself denied that she had been the cause of the sortie. The attack, she maintained, had certainly not been ordered on her account. General Bonaparte had let her know that a small action was about to take place, and that she could witness it if she cared to come.

Be this as it may, even if Louise Turreau's beauty did exercise an irresistible fascination over Napoleon, the fascination had little to do with the feeling of love. A fire of straw, that the wind may fan into a momentary blaze! Such conflagrations neither leave lasting scars, nor do they endure like the fires lighted upon the sacred hearth of love. They are extinguished as easily as they are kindled. A few sparks may still float in the air and set fire to other hearths, which in their turn quickly cool.

Yet this flirtation was no ordinary one. General Bonaparte had an underlying purpose. Although there is little evidence that, in general, Napoleon made use of women to promote his own advancement, in this instance appearances are certainly against him. We may well assume that he sought the help rather than the person of the beautiful young wife of the representative of the people. Besides, the incident was not the only one of the kind during Napoleon's early career. It is common knowledge that Madame Carteaux, the wife of his superior officer during the siege of Toulon, took up the cudgels on Bonaparte's

behalf when her husband complained that the young man was not so amenable to discipline as he should be. The confidence which Napoleon inspired in Ricord, the representative of the people, is said to have been due to the friendly mediation of Madame Ricord. Again, his sometime friend Saliceti's denunciation of Bonaparte on the ninth Thermidor as an adherent of the Robespierres, is believed by some to have been an act of vengeance against the man who had betrayed him in his wedded life. None of these "on dits" can be proved. But they do not seem improbable when we remember that at this period all the young Corsican officer's thoughts were concentrated on his advancement.

Towards the end of 1795, Napoleon met Louise Turreau in Paris. They had parted in Nice after a quarrel; now the relationships between the two were again those of lovers. In August, 1796, Louise gave birth to her first child, a girl. The fatherhood of the baby has been ascribed to Napoleon; but, seeing that Madame Turreau changed her lovers as easily as she changed her frocks, we can place very little trust in the surmise.

After he married Josephine, Bonaparte had no further intimate relationships with Louise, though Josephine's jealous suspicions were awakened while her husband was moving on from victory to victory in the Italian campaign. Madame Turreau had possessed his body for a time, never his soul. All his love, his whole heart, could belong to one woman alone, the adored woman, the incomparable Josephine—who meanwhile was playing him false in Paris with her lover Hippolyte Charles!

In answer to Josephine's reproaches, Napoleon wrote: "I am filled with despair, my dear one, that you should believe my heart can hold any other image than yours. My heart belongs to you, for you have conquered it, and this conquest will be yours for ever. I do not know why you should select Madame T. She is of as little interest to me as the women of Brescia."

Nevertheless he did not forget Louise Turreau. She became a widow in 1797 (it is reported that the husband died broken-hearted in consequence of his wife's amours),

and lived in penury for many years. She could not get into touch with Napoleon during the Consulate, nor for some time after he had become Emperor. Her appeals never got into his hands. Berthier is supposed to have kept them out of Bonaparte's sight. At length, in 1810 or 1811, fate was propitious. The Emperor was out hunting in Versailles. He remembered that a woman lived here who had loved him long ago beneath the ardent skies of the Riviera. He immediately had enquiries made. Next day, Berthier led Louise Turreau into his presence. But what a change had come over her! Where were the laughing eyes, the full lips, the youthful, elastic figure? Could this be the woman who had once bewitched him by her beauty? A disorderly life, trouble, and poverty had prematurely aged her.

When she entered the room of her former lover, the Emperor greeted this old, wrinkled, "hardly recognizable" woman with the words:

"Why did you not make use of our mutual friends in the Army of Italy in order to get into touch with me? Many of them have become people of importance and are in constant association with me."

"Unfortunately, Sire, they knew me no longer since they had risen to positions of power and I had fallen upon evil days," was the bitter reply, as she glanced with tired eyes at Berthier, Prince of Neuchâtel.

Napoleon was sorry for Louise. He recalled her erstwhile beauty and the tenderness which she had lavished on him in Nice. Unhesitatingly he granted her request for a pension of six thousand francs.

The general parted from Louise Turreau as lightly as the lieutenant had parted from Caroline du Colombier and Manesca Pillet. That was his way. He was not insusceptible to woman's charm, but he never succumbed to her seductions. Besides, he was poor, and women cost money. His Corsican heart longed for a home, for a family. Woman as mother was for him the highest ideal. To his thinking, an unfruitful marriage was of little value.

That wedded couple which produced the greatest number of children was most worthy of esteem.

But now something caused Napoleon once more to make matrimonial plans for himself. "Ce coquin de Joseph" had had the good luck to secure a wealthy young lady of Marseilles, Julie Clary, as his bride. The wedding had taken place in September, 1794. What was this devil of a Joseph? Nothing more than a simple war commissary! He, Napoleon, had at least a well-sounding title. He was brigadier-general—even though for the moment he had no command. Meanwhile he was working in the topographical office in Paris. That was something to his credit. And who could tell what the future might bring? He trusted his star. Had he not a far better claim to make a wealthy marriage than his brother Joseph?

Napoleon's choice fell upon the younger and more beautiful of the Clary sisters, Joseph's sister-in-law Désirée. He had made her acquaintance in 1794, at the time when his mother and his sisters and brothers had chosen Marseilles as a city of refuge. He and Désirée, then a lass of sixteen, had struck up a friendship; but in those days Napoleon had not seriously contemplated asking her to become his wife. As far as Désirée was concerned, the young Corsican officer seemed an ideal lover. She admired the bravery he displayed under fire at the seige of Toulon, which everyone had applauded, no less than she admired the pride with which he bore his poverty. Was he not a member of a numerous family which looked up to him as to a god? So far as Désirée's youth and intelligence permitted, she perceived the genius in the beloved man, the genius which raised him high above his contemporaries. She gave him a love so tender as to be hardly expressible in words. Her first letter to Napoleon, when he was staying with Marmont's parents at Châtillon, ran as follows: "You know how much I love you; but I shall never be able to tell you in words all I feel for you. Absence and distance will never change the feelings you have inspired in me. In a word, my whole life belongs to you."

The thought of making Desiree his wife did not mature in Napoleon's mind until he was in Paris in 1795. From this date onwards he indulged in definite plans of home-making. Desiree's dowry was supposed to amount to one hundred and fifty thousand francs—quite a competence for so poverty-stricken an officer as Napoleon. A professed republican, he was, like many of those who looked to the reaction for salvation, buoyed up by the hope of successful fishing in the troubled waters of a revolutionary time. His means were far too exiguous to cope with the rise in prices, and could in no way meet the prevalent inexhaustible craving for luxury and sensual enjoyment. Those without means lacked everything, whereas the wealthy would spend thousands upon thousands on one evening's pleasure, on a momentary caprice, on clothes, on women.

Joseph acted as intermediary in the Désirée romance. He conveyed the lovers' letters from one to the other. Whenever he had a chance, he gave his brother tidings concerning the bride elect. But no trace of passion or even of strong inclination can be detected in Napoleon's words concerning Désirée. His mind seems to have been wholly occupied with thoughts of a care-free future, aloof from political life, at one with his beloved brother. When he is married to Desiree he will have a house in town and will buy a place in the country. He will have horses and carriages. In a word, he was to become a comfortable citizen. His thoughts circled round such schemes during the months he spent in Paris.

Nevertheless, Napoleon loved this girl. Could we but glance at his letters to Desiree we might find in them something analogous to the love letters to Josephine; doubtless they would not be so glowing, so passionate in expression, but possibly they would be no less full of feeling. Unfortunately they have not come down to us. What can have become of them? Désirée must have burned these witnesses of her young happiness, although she kept a few copies of her own letters to Napoleon. She was so sure of Napoleon's love that one day when she was staying with Joseph and Julie in Genoa she wrote: "Write to

me as soon as possible, not to assure me of your affection —our hearts are too closely bound together for them ever to be separated—but to give me news of your health. You were not very well when we parted. Oh my friend! Do take care of your life so that it may be preserved for your Eugénie,[2] who cannot live without you. Keep your promise to love me for ever, as firmly as I shall keep my promise to love you. . . ."

This child found words which only a loving woman has at her command. Napoleon knew that his life with her would be a pleasant one; by love and devotion, she would make his days beautiful. For this reason he wished to hasten the day of the wedding. In every letter to his brother he speaks of the woman who is to bring him such peace and happiness. "Best wishes to your wife and to Désirée," he writes in May, 1795. A month later he talks of sending her his portrait. Since he is not quite sure whether she still wants to have it, he leaves the decision to Joseph: "Désirée has asked for a picture of me. I shall have one painted. You can give it to her if she would value it; otherwise please keep it for yourself."

For long he receives no letters from little Désirée; nor does his brother, Joseph, give him any news. Is she angry with him? Why does she not write? Napoleon is in despair. Dark shadows prowl around the airy castle of his bright future. Must all his plans be wrecked? He writes in ironic vein to Joseph on July 7, 1795, and asks: "Must one be ferried across Lethe before one can get to Genoa?" On the 19th, he writes again: "I have received no letter from Désirée since she went to Genoa."

Still Désirée does not write. Could she have forgotten him already? No. It must be Joseph's fault. Impatiently, Napoleon writes to his brother on July 25th: "I believe your silence concerning Désirée must be intentional. I don't even know if she is alive." Six days later he writes once more: "You never speak of Mademoiselle Eugénie." Now he was really wounded, hence the formal mode of address.

[2] Désirée's full name was Désirée Bernardine Eugénie Clary.

At length he receives a letter from her. Again Napoleon is happy. His self-assurance grows apace since he has first-hand news of Désirée. Thoughts of marriage take on a more definite shape. On September 5th, he writes frankly to Joseph about his plans: "If I remain here [Paris] it is not improbable that I may be seized with an unconquerable desire for marriage. Write to me about this. Perhaps it would be as well to have a talk with Eugénie's brother. Let me know the result of any such move. . . ." But he cannot await the answer; he is racked with impatience. The very next day he admonishes Joseph: "Think of my affair. I am burning to set up house. . . . Either an arrangement must be made with Eugénie or the whole thing must be broken off. . . ."

This was the last word. The rhapsodies about Désirée vanished from Napoleon's letters; her name was never again mentioned. Why? Spiteful tongues maintain that the Clarys had enough with one Bonaparte in the family, and that they refused their consent to another such union. But it may be that Napoleon changed his mind. The many beautiful women in Paris who alone "knew what realm belonged to them," who were "the loveliest in the world," the women he met at Barras's house, at Ouvrard's, at Madame Tallien's, or at Permon's, with their sumptuous toilettes, their luxury, their gleaming skin, their rosy lips, their sweetly flattering words, may have turned the thin, badly dressed general's head. He may have been made to forget the young provincial maiden with her lovely, innocent, brown eyes. She knew nothing of Paris, where there was no middle course for woman; where women were either members of society or else members of the demi-monde.

Yes, Napoleon had so completely forgotten Désirée that he actually made a proposal of marriage to a friend of his mother's, Madame Permon, who had recently lost her husband. She had two children, one of whom ultimately became the wife of General Junot, and thus, in due course, Duchess of Abrantes. Then he sought comfort with Madame de la Boucharderie, who was later married to Le Beau de l'Esparda. She had been Marie Joseph

Chénier's mistress, and had, during the days of the Convention, led a dissolute life. It seems that Napoleon had a special predilection for women who were older than himself.

The imperial crown of the French was not destined for Désirée Clary's head. She was not to be the companion of Napoleon's glorious and brilliant days. But in the fulness of time, nevertheless, she was to become the ruler of another people: with Bernadotte as king she would reign as Queen of Sweden!

She never ceased to love her unfaithful lover, and suffered greatly under his neglect. Poor little Désirée! Her tears came too late. A viscountess had robbed her of Napoleon. She found the blow a difficult one to recover from. When he married Josephine de Beauharnais, a cry of despair came from Désirée's broken heart in a letter she wrote to him: "You have made me so unhappy, and I am weak enough to forgive you! . . . You, married! Poor Désirée must no longer love you or think of you? . . . My one consolation is that you will know how steadfast I am. . . . I have nothing more to hope for but death. Life is a torment to me, since I may no longer dedicate it to you. . . . You, married! I cannot grasp the thought—it kills me. Never shall I belong to another. . . . And I had so hoped soon to be the happiest of women, your wife! Your marriage has shattered my happiness. . . . All the same I wish you the greatest joy and blessing in your marriage. May the woman you have chosen make you as happy as I had intended to make you, and as happy as you deserve to be. In the midst of your present happiness do not quite forget poor Eugénie, and be sorry for her fate!"

These reproachful words struck deep at Napoleon's heart. He fully realized that there was a wound for him to staunch. On his way to Italy he went to Marseilles, so that in person he might beg forgiveness. In later days he endeavoured to arrange an advantageous marriage for Désirée. The twenty-six-year-old general Léonard Duphot seemed to him a worthy spouse for the girl. On November 13, 1797, Napoleon wrote to Joseph, who was

then in Rome, and with whom Désirée was staying: "General Duphot will present this letter to you. He will have a talk with you concerning the marriage which he hopes to conclude with your sister-in-law. I consider this to be a most advantageous match for her. Duphot is an excellent officer."

Rumour has it that Désirée was not unfavourable to a suit so well recommended, although it was common knowledge that Duphot had a mistress, and an illegitimate son three years old. But fate decreed otherwise. The brave young officer's life was taken from him under most tragic circumstances. When, on December 27, 1797, he was about to defend Joseph against the raging mob in front of the French embassy in Rome, a bullet killed him before the eyes of his betrothed.

Baron Hochschild, a Swedish nobleman, who knew the Queen of Sweden personally, denies, however, that there had been a betrothal. In 1856, Hochschild was reading aloud to Her Majesty the correspondence of Joseph Bonaparte, which had just been published in book form. When he came to the letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs wherein Joseph writes that his sister-in-law was to have wedded Duphot, the Queen broke in with: "That's not true! I never cared for Duphot, and had no intention of marrying him."

Napoleon then chose Marmont, and, later, Junot, as aspirants to Désirée's hand. Both were rejected. In the long run, however, she yielded, and on the thirtieth Thermidor of the Year VI (July 17, 1798) she became the wife of General Bernadotte. The choice did not please Napoleon, who was then in Egypt. But he wrote from Cairo. "I hope Désirée may be happy with Bernadotte. She deserves to be." Before a year was up, Désirée begged General Bonaparte to stand godfather to her first-born. She had her revenge! A triumphant glance shot from her eyes as she showed her baby son to Napoleon. A son! In her second marriage, Josephine was childless. Might not the faithless lover now feel regret for not having married young Désirée? Napoleon gave Désirée's boy the heroic name of Oscar, as if he could foresee the

day when this child should become a prince of a northern realm.

Bernadotte was Napoleon's foe. Yet Napoleon always treated Bernadotte as a friend, because of Désirée, whose heart he had once so grievously wounded. For her sake, Bernadotte was created marshal of France; for her sake, Napoleon bought Moreau's mansion for four hundred thousand francs and presented it to Bernadotte; for her sake, he gave Bernadotte the title of Prince of Ponte Corvo, and apportioned him an income of three hundred thousand francs. For Désirée's sake, Napoleon forgave all the mistakes the general made while campaigning. For her sake, Napoleon gave his sanction to the choice of the Swedish people, which had selected Bernadotte as successor to the throne. One word from Napoleon, and the Swedish crown would merely have been fluttered for a moment before Bernadotte's eyes. All these things he did for Désirée's sake. How did Bernadotte express his thanks? By shameless betrayal.

Désirée's gentle and tender heart clung lovingly to her husband, of whom she was truly fond. But even when she sat upon the throne of the Vasas she could not forget the days of her youth in which she had loved General Bonaparte. Long after she had become the owner of a beautiful castle in her northern realm, she could not make up her mind to leave Paris, the city where he had lived, he whom she had loved, the city where she might have reigned as empress. When at length she went to live in her new country, she clung to her house in Paris as to a jewel of great price. She did not even surrender it when, under the Second Empire, the authorities wished to pull it down in order to make the Boulevard Haussmann. Napoleon III possessed fine enough feelings to await her death before allowing the mansion to fall under the housebreaker's pick. Désirée Clary, Queen of Sweden, died on December 17, 1860, eighty-three years of age. Among her papers were found a few documents, yellowed with age, which told of a love of long ago, and which she had cherished until the end.

She never forgot her love — nor forgave her lover

CHAPTER THREE

THREE SPRING DAYS AT CHATILLON

Almost at the same period when the Désirée romance was opening in Marseilles, another female form swam into the orbit of young Napoleon. This lady was Victorine de Chastenay.

On April 9, 1795, the general of artillery, Napoleon Bonaparte, received orders to betake himself to the Army of the West in Vendée. Here the valiant Hoche had won for himself both honour and glory. Napoleon could not be pleased at such a change of environment. In the first place, he did not like the prospect of being under the command of a rival. In the second place, the kind of warfare then being carried on in Vendée was repugnant to him, for he hated civil war. He therefore postponed his departure from Marseilles. His family and likewise little Désirée held him back, and he found ever fresh excuses for not undertaking the journey yet awhile. One such pretext was that he must await the arrival of General Dujard, who was to take his place in the Army of Italy. Dujard made his appearance in Marseilles at the beginning of May 1795. Now the young man was obliged to depart.

On May 9th, General Bonaparte set forth. Although for form's sake he sent his carriage and horses to Vendée in advance, his own destination was not the seat of war, but Paris. In the capital, he hoped to find ways and means whereby he might scotch the idea of taking up his duties under the hated command of General Hoche. At all events he wished to gain time in order to try to get a more agreeable war appointment.

Napoleon was accompanied on his journey by his sixteen-year-old brother Louis (who was to be taken to the military school at Châlons), by Adjutant Junot, and by Captain Marmont. Junot and Marmont were full of admiration for their general, who had hardly reached his

six-and-twentieth year, and yet had already had his courage and intelligence put to the test. Marmont, whose relationship was rather that of friend than an adjutant ascribed all he had ever learnt, all his ideas and impressions, to Bonaparte's influence. He could not sufficiently sing the praises of this amazing genius. Who could have imagined that, in days to come, Marmont was to betray the Emperor?

But that betrayal lay in the womb of time. Not one of the four travellers in the comfortable, not to say luxurious, carriage which was wending its way from Marseilles to Paris had the remotest idea that the young general whose future was obscure, was destined to become the first gentleman of France. Least of all did such a thought cross Napoleon's own mind. He was wholly engrossed with devising a means whereby his appointment in Vendée might be cancelled, so that he could rejoin the Army of Italy. His thoughts flew hither and thither, alighting at times in Marseilles speeding towards Désirée and towards his brother, Joseph, for whom he was to buy property in Montélimar and Châlon-sur-Saône. Did Napoleon allow his mind to dwell in secret upon the possibility of his setting up a home of his own in company with Désirée?

The travellers took a few days' rest at Châtillon ere going on to the capital. Marmont's parents lived here, on an estate at the farther extremity of the town. The name of the Marmonts' place was Châtelot. Here, in an anti-Jacobin circle of the provincial nobility (which, in consequence of its reactionary ideas, looked askance at the "blue officers," as they were nicknamed), the pale, taciturn, republican general did not make a very favourable impression. It was known that he had been a friend of the younger Robespierre, and that he had been under arrest in Antibes on suspicion as a member of the Robespierre faction. This was enough to make them stand-offish in the manner to him. In spite of Marmont's and Junot's enthusiastic commendation of the young general, his visit to Châtillon would have been a failure had not a

youthful noblewoman, Countess Victorine de Chastenay, taken him up and constituted herself his champion.

Madame de Marmont had been at her wits' end to know what to do with her silent guest. He spoke only when obliged to do so, followed his own bent, or occupied himself with his brother Louis (for whose education he was making himself responsible). Napoleon proved so severe a task-master to the lad that all the ladies at Châtillon were sorry for Louis, whose winning manners had conquered their hearts.

At last, in order to provide a pleasant distraction for her little party of guests, Madame de Marmont introduced General Bonaparte, Junot, and young Louis, to her neighbours, Count and Countess de Chastenay. The daughter of the house, Victorine, was four-and-twenty years of age, and was a most amiable and clever girl, whose gay and congenial disposition, combined with her cultural attainments, made her outshine the majority of her contemporaries. Madame de Marmont secretly hoped that Victorine would succeed in amusing her taciturn guest.

Arrived at the Chastenay's, the party prepared to listen to Victorine's playing on the piano. But General Bonaparte paid not the slightest attention to the player, or to the music she played. The few polite nothings he addressed to her were dry and commonplace. Then Mademoiselle Victorine sang an Italian ballad, which she herself had set to music. Maybe Marmont or Junot had hinted to the young musician that Napoleon was fond of Italian songs. Having finished singing her composition, the damsel asked the general whether the Italian words had been correctly pronounced. "No," was the curt and unamiable answer. Thus, the first visit to the Chastenays left little to be hoped for.

Nothing daunted, Madame de Marmont invited the Chastenays to dinner on the following day. The general's abrupt manner, his long, badly powdered locks, his deep-sunk eyes, in a word, his highly original appearance, exercised an irresistible charm over the young countess. She

was filled with eagerness to make the strange man speak with her; he was so utterly different from any of the men in her circle. Ordinary drawing-room chatter, she well knew, would be useless in the case of such a man as General Bonaparte.

After dinner, which she felt would never come to an end, Victorine intrepidly approached Napoleon and asked him a question concerning his homeland, his Corsica. The frost broke, the ice melted, and the tongue of the silent general was loosed! His eyes brightened, his features became animated, and, to everyone's amazement, the conversation flowed forward in a steady stream.

Between the windows of the drawing-room, leaning against a pillar, the two young people talked and talked, quite unconscious of the passage of time. When at length they ceased, four hours had passed away. Bonaparte could have continued this tête-à-tête as long again! He was telling Victorine about Corsica, confiding to her his plans! He even spoke about politics, about matters military, about civil war (which he condemned), about the revolution and its consequences. Victorine hung upon his every word. The amazing superiority of this man over his fellows, the wonderful mobility of his mind which could turn from one theme to another with the utmost ease, the lucidity of his exposition, held her captive. It seemed to her that, for the first time in her life, she had met an intelligent man.

With winged words, Napoleon unfolded before her eyes the picture of the revolution and its terrors. Horror seized her as she realized the crimes which had drenched the soil of France with blood, and, breathless with enthusiasm, she became a partisan of the Thermidorian party which had put an end to all this suffering. But General Bonaparte's opinion of the men who had made the ninth Thermidor was less favorable. He had known them before that date as terrorists. "A person may be responsible for a great deal of harm without himself being a bad man," he sententiously observed. "An ill-considered signature may cost thousands of lives. It

would be well continually to hold up a picture before men's eyes, a canvas upon which should be depicted all the intrigues, all the catastrophes, all the suffering a thoughtless decision might bring in its wake."

Then their conversation turned to literature. Bonaparte spoke of the Ossianic cycle, and said that he prized the Scottish poet in the highest degree. Mademoiselle de Chastenay knew the poet's name, but not his work. Thereupon Napoleon begged her to allow him to buy a copy of the book as soon as he got to Paris, and to come in person to present it to her. The countess was, however, a trifle shy. She feared lest by granting the young officer permission to visit her and give her such a present, she might be infringing the code of decorous behaviour. Accordingly she thanked him, but declined his offer.

By the time General Bonaparte bade her good-night, Victorine had become an enthusiastic admirer, indifferent as to who should hear her sing his praises. The details of the interview were stamped upon her memory, and when, at the age of forty-six, she came to write her reminiscences she could still clearly remember the main points of that remarkable conversation. Only, at the later date, her admiration for the exceptional man was not quite so fervent!

General Bonaparte saw Victorine daily for the remainder of his visit to Châtillon. In her company he became more approachable; he took part in the excursions and walks of the company; gallantly picked for her a posy of cornflowers; played at forfeits of an evening in Châtelot. Thus it happened that one night the young countess had the man to whom the whole world was soon to pay homage kneeling at her feet.

But the hour of parting came, and the close companionship between the two young people was cut short. Napoleon never again visited Châtillon. Not until the days of the Consulate did he see the countess once more, this time in Josephine's boudoir. The two women had struck up acquaintance during the Directory, having met in Barras's house. It appears that Victorine soon assimilated

the loose ways prevalent at that date, and lived on intimate terms with Monsieur de Châteaurenault. She came to beg Madame Bonaparte to intercede with the First Consul on behalf of a certain émigré, and to procure her an audience. But Josephine's jealousy made her suspicious. Napolean had told his wife about his friend at Châtillon, and had commented upon her extraordinary cleverness. Maybe his encomiums had been a trifle too cordial! Anyway, Josephine became uneasy. She promised to do her best on behalf of the countess's request; but she arranged matters in such a way that there was no further personal encounter between the old acquaintances. Josephine may have fancied that Mademoiselle de Chastenay meant to influence the First Consul towards a divorce, for the possibility of divorce followed the lady about like a ghost. Her suspicions may have been well grounded, seeing that the countess was a close friend of Napoleon's brothers, who left no stone unturned in order to get rid of "la vieille." After that first encounter in her boudoir, Josephine succeeded in keeping Napoleon and Victorine apart.

Although Mademoiselle de Chastenay did not often appear at court functions under the Consulate and the Empire, she was always to be seen at receptions given by ministers of State and other dignitaries. Her fine intellectual attainments, her renown as a writer,[1] her friendship with the most distinguished families, and her own aristocratic descent, made her company sought after, not only by scholars and literary folk, but likewise by political magnates. Fouché, the Minister of Police, and Réal, the Councillor of State, were numbered among her intimates.

She could never be persuaded to become one of the adulators at Napoleon's court, for, though she had a keen

[1] Mademoiselle de Chastenay earned a reputation in literary circles by original works and by translations. Among her published writings, I may mention: *Calendrier de Flore, ou Etudes de fleurs d'après nature*, Paris, 1802; *Les chevaliers normands en Italie et en Sicile*, Paris, 1816; *Du génie des peuples anciens, ou tableau du développement de l'esprit humain chez les peuples anciens*, Paris, 1808. Among her translations, I may cite two from the English: Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*.

appreciation of his extraordinary genius, she cared little for him as a man. The indifference was reciprocated by Bonaparte. Neither he nor the lady sought to revive the friendship begun at Châtillon. But chance was to bring Napoleon and Victorine together once more. The encounter took place after Josephine's forced retirement, when Marie Louise sat upon the throne of France.

Savary, Duke of Rovigo, gave a ball during the winter of 1811 in honour of the imperial bride and bridegroom. Napoleon had often noticed Mademoiselle de Chastenay's presence at other court balls, but she had always contrived to be in one of the back rows when he made his rounds. She did not like the way he addressed the ladies of his court. Perhaps she dreaded some indiscreet word anent her relationship to Réal, with whom she stood on terms more intimate than those of friendship.

But on the occasion of the Duke of Rovigo's ball she found it impossible to avoid the Emperor's eyes. She was with Real's daughter, Madame Lacuée, and with Madame de Brancas, in the front row of court ladies, when Napoleon and Marie Louise entered the ball-room. Madame de Brancas was the first to receive the Emperor's flattering attentions. He asked her whether she danced. "No, Sire, I no longer dance," was her reply. "You should not answer thus," said the Emperor. "You should say: 'I do not dance.' The words: 'I no longer dance,' contain a second thought."

Then came Countess de Chastenay's turn. She had not been able to restrain a little trill of laughter at the Emperor's repartee, and Napoleon was well aware of the mirth he had provoked. He therefore accosted her with the remark that they had known one another in earlier days. "Yes, yes," he pursued, addressing her by name, "I know you very well. I first met you in Châtillon. How is your mother?" And, without giving her time to answer, he went on: "Do you remember our long talk? Do you still remember? Tell me! Sixteen years ago! Yes, in very truth, sixteen years ago!" For a third time he repeated: "Sixteen years ago!"

He then paid Mademoiselle de Chastenay a few pretty compliments on her writings, called her a Muse, and asked whether she still cultivated her musical talents. He seemed to have forgotten nothing connected with those days in May, 1795, which he had passed so pleasantly at Châtillon. A few days later the countess sent him some of her works, *Le génie des anciens, Udolphe,* and *Le calendrier de Flore.* The Emperor vouchsafed to receive her gift, but did not write a word of thanks. Victorine de Chastenay never saw him again.

IN PARIS

CHAPTER FOUR

NOTRE DAME DE THERMIDOR

The ninth Thermidor put an end to the Terror. As if awakening from a nightmare, the French people, and especially the Parisians, hurled themselves into a vortex of sensuous pleasure. Henceforward one could give oneself up to other things than the mere preservation of one's life. Death no longer crouched in every corner. People, glutted with barbaric enjoyments, found other distractions than death-dealing. Public and private merrymaking was no longer to be subject to a tyrannical censorship.

A new society arose in France, a society corrupted by revolution anl craving for fleshly pleasures. This new society was born out of the ruins of the Terror, and consisted of a medley of people belonging to the old and to the new order, professing more or less revolutionary feelings.

The lioness of this society was the most courted, the most spoiled, and the most influential woman in Paris, the beautiful Jeanne Marie Ignace Thérésia Cabarrus, wife of the Marquis de Fontenay (whom she had divorced), mistress and later wife of Tallien, the Thermidorian. Her little hand had been able to push back the bars of the dungeons of the revolution, and to set free those who languished in the dark cells. It was due to her influence upon her lover that the overthrow of the Robespierre dictatorship was achieved. Liberated France now lay at her feet. Everyone paid her homage. The people nicknamed her "Notre Dame de Thermidor." Even when she was no longer Tallien's wife, when she had taken up her residence at the Luxembourg Palace as mistress of the young Director, Barras, and held court there, when the people had christened her in pleasantry "La Propriéteé du Gouvernement," still she preserved her re-

nown as the saviour, the good fairy, of France. Her parties in the celebrated Chaumière were still, as before, a meeting-place for all the celebrities of the day.

Thérésia Tallien had surrounded herself with a bevy of beautiful and amiable ladies, who were, like herself, conspicuous for elegance, extravagance, and loose morality. Madame de Navailles, Madame de Beauharnais (whose husband had perished on the scaffold, and who, later, shared with Thérésia in Barras's favours), Madame Rovère (wife of a deputy belonging to the Montagnard faction in the House), Madame de Châteaurenault, Madame de Forbin, all helped to attract men to Madame Tallien's salon and to make of it a political centre. At Thérésia's, the political intriguers of the day kept tryst with one another; army contractors did business under her roof; in a word, everyone, whether man or woman, who had any share in the feverish activities of public life, foregathered in Madame Tallien's home. It is quite likely that the whole of the thirteenth Vendémiaire was stage-managed from the same place.

If political interest did not entice the guest within Madame Tallien's walls, then it was the hostess's truly classical beauty, her charm, her elegance, her inordinate extravagance, which became the lure. She allowed herself certain liberties of conduct which, even in those free-and-easy days, attracted much notice. Her naked loveliness was not only exhibited before Barras's eyes, or Ouvrard's, or within the precincts of the Chaumière, but also when she was driving out in the public parks, or taking her place in the auditorium of a theatre; in fact anywhere and everywhere she would display herself before the gaze of the curious and the envious. An essential need of her nature was to fascinate and allure the world, and especially the world of men. Once she appeared in her box at the opera, personifying Diana, in classical nudity, clad in nothing but a tiger skin!

One day, a few weeks before the thirteenth Vendémiaire, Barras introduced a young artillery officer to his beautiful friend. The lad was small and thin. His pale

face was framed in lank, brown hair, which fell over his shoulders. His uniform was old and threadbare. The skirts of his coat were far too long; his shoes were much down at heel. Among the company assembled in the elegant and luxurious room, he was the most insignificant and the most poverty-stricken unit. But his eyes were bright and keen; the delicate lines of the mouth showed will power and determination; when he spoke, he seemed to gain in stature.

Thérésia condescended to pay special attention to the young officer. She displayed her most bewitching charms for his benefit. He, in his turn, was gallant and polite towards her. Her victorious beauty dazzled him who had as yet no other religion save that of fame. The gathering soon began to pay heed to the ill-assorted couple. What could Thérésia see in this impoverished officer who looked like a country bumpkin, whose demeanour led one to suppose that he was not accustomed to tread the polished floors of Parisian salons? When, that same evening, after the young man's departure, Madame de Beauharnais mockingly asked her friend who the man was, Madame Tallien answered: "That was General Bonaparte."

He came frequently after this first visit, partly prompted thereto by ambition (for he wished to be in touch with influential people), and partly because of the unusual charm which such a bevy of fair women, who seemed to him like muses round a goddess's throne, exercised upon his sensitive Corsican heart. He now came to realize that, in Paris, woman was not without influence on public affairs. "Women are everywhere," he wrote to his brother Joseph. "They are in the theatre, about in parks, reading in the libraries. Beautiful women are met with in the studies of scholars. . . . Indeed, men are wholly infatuated by them. They think of nothing but women, they live only for woman and through her permission!"

Converse was not always about politics, although the fall in the rate of exchange was very often the most important item of discussion. The gracious hostess was

well versed in the art of leading her guests into other avenues of talk. Her lady friends were all as fascinating, vivacious, and frivolous as herself. Dancing was much in vogue at her house. Sometimes music was to the fore; at other times the company would be entertained by recitations; or, again, merry games, such as kiss-in-the-ring, would delight the guests. In a word, no etiquette prevailed to damp these exuberant spirits. Even General Bonaparte's gravity fell a prey. One day he took Thérésia by her exquisitely moulded arm. Her hand lay in his, and the delicate lines of her palm gave him the idea of telling her fortune. Madame Tallien was not loth. A circle of inquisitive ladies and gentlemen surrounded the pair, and in ominous tones Napoleon foretold the most ridiculous things. The others were intensely amused by his drollery, and hand after hand was stretched out. Laughter and jokes knew no end!

Madame Tallien at this date was at the climax of her beauty.[1] Tall and slender, she overtowered most of the women she moved among. She affected the Greek manner of dress. An India-muslin garb fell in ample folds round her exquisite body, which was veiled and yet revealed by the transparent material. Her jet-black hair was curled and arranged to resemble the classical busts in the Vatican. Like an ebony frame, her locks clustered round her pale and lovely face. Her feet were bare, save for the sandals which were kept in place by golden lacets tied round her ankles. Her arms were so marvellously formed that even a Canova might have used them as models for the most beautiful of his statues. Her large, widely opening eyes were full of light; her small, sensuous mouth smiled with the conscious power of victory over the crowd of young sparks who clamoured for her favours.

And her voice! It sounded like the song of the sirens, and those who would fain withstand it must needs, like Odysseus, stop their ears with wax. With unparalleled grace, Thérésia would play the coquette in her great cash-

[1] She was born on July 31, 1773, in a castle near Madrid. Her parents were of French nationality.

mere shawl, the blood-red colour of which made a striking contrast to the pearly whiteness of her arms and shoulders.

Both her physical and her spiritual attributes seemed to be made for seduction; indeed, she was by nature a hetæra. Her power lay in the conquest of man: one glance from her bright eyes was enough to make him her slave. But she, too, was lost as soon as she became the victor. She had weapons for attack but none for defence, and no sooner had a man touched her lips with his than she yielded herself unresistingly to his will.

Such was Thérésia Tallien, the queen of light-o'-loves, "a veritable Calypso," as Lucien Bonaparte named her. One of her contemporaries, the Duchess of Abrantes, compared her to the Capitoline Venus. "But she was even more beautiful than Phidias's statue, for she possessed the same purity of feature, the same perfection of arms, hands, and feet, with the added advantage of being alive. The outward form was the mirror of her soul, the reflection of her finest quality—kindliness."

This woman attracted all men into her circle of light, even that apparent changeling of Dame Fortune who went by the name of General Bonaparte. Napoleon was at this time in the direst straits. He could not afford to buy himself a new uniform. In the Year III, the Committee of Public Safety had passed a resolution that officers on active service should be supplied with cloth sufficient to provide a coat, a cloak, a waistcoat, and smalls. But Bonaparte's commission had temporarily been cancelled, and he was unable to procure the material.

His last hope was Thérésia. To her all things were possible. One word from her would suffice to bring him what he needed. At last one day he summoned up courage, and laid his case before her. Notre Dame de Thermidor proved her immediate willingness by giving him a letter to Lefeuve, the paymaster of the 17th army division. A few days later, before the thirteenth Vendémiaire, Napoleon possessed a new uniform. Now he need no longer be shamed among the company at his benefactress's house. Perhaps it was this same uniform he was

wearing in the auspicious hour when his star rose and the day of his power dawned? Thérésia had brought him good luck. Soon, the man who now wore the simple uniform of an artillery officer would be clothed in the imperial purple!

Napoleon showed Thérésia no gratitude for what she had done. Indeed, she was one of the very few persons who, in the days of his fame and glory, received no recognition from him. What was the cause? Barras maintains in his not very trustworthy memoirs that Napoleon never forgave her for rejecting his advances. But why had she withstood his addresses? Could it be that she, who was perpetually flying from one man's arms into another's, who never troubled herself about belonging to one lover more than to his rival, could have had a special desire for the outwardly unattractive general and yet refused him her favours when he sought them? Or are we to suppose that she was one of those women of whom Restif de la Bretonne writes: "None knows better how to keep a man at arm's length than she who has not always done so."

In a letter from Napoleon to Barras, the closing words are: "A kiss for the ladies Tallien and Châteaurenault: [2] the first on the lips, the second on the cheek." We may conclude from this that the young officer's lips had already touched those of the beautiful siren. This letter was written in the days when it was still advantageous to be on terms with such people. Later, when he returned from Egypt and had determined to give the death-blow to the Directory, Napoleon forbade Josephine to have any intercourse at all with her erstwhile friend and with the ladies of Tallien's circle. Neither the defiant Creole, Madame Hamelin, nor Barras's two friends, Madame de Châteaurenault and Madame de Forbin, were ever allowed to cross the threshold of the Consular court. This prohibition did not hinder Josephine from seeing her friends secretly. More than once, Napoleon found it necessary to remind Josephine of his wishes. But that clever diplo-

[2] This lady was likewise one of Barras's mistresses.

matist could always circumvent his instructions. His indignation was intense when, in 1806 at the time of his stay in Berlin, he learned that Josephine had actually received Madame Tallien. In a fury he wrote: "I absolutely forbid you to have anything to do with Madame Tallien, no matter what your pretext may be. I can accept no excuses. If you value my esteem, if you wish to please me, do not infringe these orders. I am told that she passes the night with you. Forbid your porters to admit her. A miserable wretch of a man has married her in spite of her eight bastards. I despise her now more than in former days. She used to be an amiable strumpet, now she has become a woman of horror and infamy."

Napoleon was unduly harsh in his animadversions against Madame Tallien, who had, meanwhile married Prince Caraman-Chimay. She had not eight illegitimate children, but six. A goodly number, I admit. In 1789 she gave birth to a son by her first husband, the Marquis de Fontenay. During her intimacy with Tallien, in 1795, she had a daughter named Thermidor, to whom Josephine Beauharnais acted as godmother. On December 20, 1798, while Tallien was on his way to Egypt, she gave birth to another child which died soon after it saw the light. The fatherhood of this infant has been ascribed to Barras. A daughter, who was registered under the mother's maiden name of Carrabus, was born on January 31, 1800. It is possible that Ouvrard was the father of this girl, as he was of three other children born later.

Madame Tallien, and likewise Josephine, ascribed Napoleon's severity to his dislike of the army contractor Ouvrard, who had been Thérésia's lover during five years.[3] She left no stone unturned in order to obtain Bonaparte's favour. An unquenchable longing to play a part in the salons of the new regime, to become, as in the days of the Directory, the lioness of society, made her throw dignity and pride to the winds. No means was too insignificant to use in order to soften the heart of the

[3] In 1800 Napoleon had Ouvrard arrested on a charge of peculation.

First Consul. But her petitions were of no avail. Even the most suppliant of missives to her friend Josephine bore no fruit. Napoleon had his own ideas about morality in women. Towards one woman alone was he lenient in this matter: towards Josephine.

Thérésia Tallien had had an all too stormy past. She had exposed her body too often for all the world to gape at, and had given too free a rein to her passions. Napoleon desired the presence of respectable women at his court. The first measure he took to ensure this was to introduce a more seemly fashion in ladies' apparel. Gone were the days when they could wear the robes of mythological beings. Flesh-tinted tights were banished; the indispensable articles of clothing which had been so out of favour during the Directory, came into their own again, and, no matter how beautiful the body might be, it had now to be decently veiled. Thérésia, who had once been the leader of fashion, had to bow submissively before the new decrees. She lived like a respectable middle-class woman with Ouvrard, every year she bore him a child, and avoided everything which could possibly affront the First Consul. Her beauty was no whit impaired. Though hard upon thirty, the passage of the years had only given her the triumphant pride of maturity. But the Tuileries remained closed to her despite the tears of rage and disappointment which she shed over her exclusion.

At length, Napoleon took pity on the beautiful sinner. He made an assignation with her at the celebrated Marescalchi masked ball. She was to wear a green ribbon, and was to give her arm to a domino wearing a similar colour. The evening came. Madame Tallien, wearing a domino and sporting the stipulated colour, looked feverishly round the gaily decorated hall. Two dominoes now appeared, one of them wearing a green ribbon. The green-bedecked domino detached itself from the company of its companion (Doctor Lucas) and offered her an arm. For two long hours the dominoes with the green ribbons were seen to converse. One appeared to be exhausting itself in

MADAME TALLIEN
After a painting by Gérard

begging and beseeching; the other remained cold and aloof. From time to time Napoleon dropped her a little compliment to keep her in countenance, but his answer was formal: the erstwhile "Propriété du Gouvernement" was forbidden to enter the Tuileries. All that had happened before the thirteenth Vendémiaire was to be forgotten. In those days he had needed her society; Barras, Ouvrard, and others were of use to him then. Times had changed. He was now the master. He did not wish to introduce the loose ways that had been the fashion under the Directory, into the court of the First Consul, and this would inevitably come to pass if Thérésia were admitted to the Tuileries. Besides he had no wish to be reminded of the days when he had been compelled to beg for a uniform.

Thérésia was not a woman who could easily be fobbed off. When Napoleon became Emperor, when she saw Josephine (who had once shared Barras's love with her, to whom she had so often given a helping hand in the days when the spendthrift Creole's debts were more pressing than usual), adorned with imperial crown and mantle, Thérésia's desire became more ardent, a desire to shine in those splendid halls whose doors were so ruthlessly closed upon her by the man of might. Ah, how she longed to crush the parvenu duchesses and marchionesses who were so bewildered, so awkward in the management of their trains, how she longed to crush them by her dazzling beauty, her grace, and the ease with which she found her way through the intricacies of court etiquette. She would show them, she, the sometime Marquise de Fontenay, despite her metamorphosis into Notre Dame de Thermidor and the Lionne du Directoire, she would show them the fine ways of the Ancien Régime!

One means remained with which to attain her goal. She must endeavour to have a personal interview with the Emperor. He was a man: why should he alone among men withstand her charm. How and where could the interview take place, that was the question. Only at the masked balls, which Napoleon never failed to attend and

which were open to all. Thérésia was obstinate. During his exile on St. Helena, Napoleon told the story of how year by year the same domino accosted him, how she would remind him of old days, and of the kindly acts she had performed for him and for those dear to him. He listened politely, but the answer was always the same. "I do not deny, Madame, that you are charming. Consider what you are asking of me. Judge for yourself. You have two or three husbands, and children by all and sundry. Doubtless one could esteem oneself a lucky fellow to have been partner in the first fall; the second fall makes one angry, but can perhaps still be forgiven. But the others!—Besides . . . Put yourself in my place, and judge for yourself. What would you do if you were me? You see, I must reserve a certain modicum of decorum. . . ."

Thérésia could only answer: "Sire, I pray you, do not deprive me of all hope."

Thus it was that they often met at masked balls and neither ever missed the tryst.

Napoleon, however, was not to be cajoled. Nor was he less severe in such matters with the members of his own family. He could never forgive Lucien for having married Alexandrine Jouberthon, who had borne him a child before the wedding. Madame Visconti was not allowed access to the imperial court, for she was Berthier's mistress. Madame Grant was also excluded because, though she subsequently had married Talleyrand, she had lived with him on intimate terms beforehand. Indeed the Emperor would not have tolerated her presence in the minister's house at all unless he had made her his spouse. One day Talleyrand was faced with the alternative: Either to marry Madame Grant (who at one time had been very beautiful), or to clear her out of his house; and the decision was to be made within four-and-twenty hours!

The Emperor showed himself just as severe towards the frivolous Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély. She was as unfaithful to her numerous lovers as she was to her husband. It was due to her "flirtation" with the

Prince of Coburg that her husband never became minister of State. On February 20, 1809, Napoleon wrote to his arch-chancellor, Cambacérès:

"Ask Monsieur R. to come and see you. Tell him that his wife's behaviour is scandalous. Her boudoir is a disgrace to Paris. She must immediately amend her ways, for, if she persists in her present conduct, I shall be constrained to make public my disapproval in the matter."

Thérésia Tallien was, however, the most carefully supervised of these ladies. She was not even permitted to choose her own circle of friends. On January 22, 1808, a police bulletin, signed by Fouché, ran as follows:

"The diplomatic corps has been amazed to learn that last Thursday Madame Tallien was invited to Monsieur de Champagny's house, and was given the place of honour at the banquet.[4] Neither foreigners nor Frenchmen can approve of honours being given to strumpets."

Thérésia Tallien had her revenge when she once more entered the ranks of the old French nobility, to which she had belonged in pre-revolutionary days as the wife of the Marquis de Fontenay. She found a true spouse in Count Caraman, who later became Prince Chimay. They were married on July 18, 1805, and the bride celebrated a little triumph over the parvenu society dames. A year later, she and her husband went to Italy. Joseph, King of Naples, did not close the golden gates of paradise against her as his brother had done in Paris, and as King William III of the Netherlands did in later days when Prince Chimay was chamberlain at the court. When Princess Chimay returned to Paris and was looking forward to a triumphal entry into the social life of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, she found all the doors barred against her here as elsewhere. Princess Chimay, in spite of her best endeavours, remained for ever Thérésia Tallien, Notre Dame de Thermidor, la Propriété du Gouvernement, la Lionne du Directoire, the mistress of Barras and of Ouvrard!

Yet it was not ingratitude that led Napoleon to behave so ruthlessly to the woman whose charm had once exer-

[4] He was Minister for Foreign Affairs at this date.

cised an influence over him as over others. His position as head of the State, the quite peculiar position of his court in relation to the other European courts, constrained him to such severity. He did not banish her from Paris; it was only his court she was to eschew. Madame de Staël and Madame de Chevreuse had been forbidden to come within forty leagues of the capital. For a woman like Madame Tallien, to whom Paris was as necessary as bread to the hungry, this permission to reside in the metropolis must have been some consolation at least. "It was not against Madame Tallien personally that the conqueror of the Army of Italy felt dislike," writes Arsène Houssaye, "but against the society which flourished under the Directory."

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

CHAPTER FIVE

JOSEPHINE

I

No words can better describe Napoleon's first wife than those in which he himself portrays her. "Two women played a leading part in my life. One was art and grace personified; the other embodied innocence and simplicity. Each possessed special merits. In every moment of her life, in whatever circumstances she might find herself, the first was charming and seductive. Impossible to discover a blemish in her. She utilized every art to enhance her womanly attraction, but she did this so cleverly and discreetly that none of her devices were obvious. The other lady had not the faintest notion that something might be gained by the use of some innocent feminine arts. The former sailed fairly near the truth. Her first answer was always in the negative. The latter did not know what it was to tell a lie, and all evasions were foreign to her. The first never asked her husband for anything, but borrowed from anyone who would lend. The second never hesitated to ask for what money she needed when she had nothing left, though such a state of affairs seldom arose: she never bought anything she could not pay for then and there. Both women were good and gentle, and were devoted to their husband."

Napoleon's first wife, the woman he loved as he loved none other, the woman who exercised the most lasting influence over him, saw the light of day for the first time under the blue skies of the most beautiful island of the Lesser Antilles. Her birthplace was Trois-Ilets in Martinique. Her father was Joseph Gaspard Tascher de la Pagerie,[1] lieutenant of artillery, and owner of a coffee plantation and sugar estate.

[1] He was born in 1735, at Carbet on the same island. His wife, Rose Claire des Vergers de Sannois, belonged to one of the oldest and most respected families of French settlers in Martinique. She was born in 1736 and died in 1807 at Trois-Ilets.

Marie Josephe Rose [2] grew up under tropical skies, her French temperament touched to warmer hues by the ardours of her native sun. Thus she developed into that delightful Creole type which is as alluring as it is peculiar. The intoxicating grace of her supple body, her creamy complexion, her lovely, pensive eyes with their long, dark lashes, her glossy auburn hair which framed her delicate face in elfin ringlets, and the winning, melodious voice, took all hearts by storm. Napoleon once exclaimed: "Josephine wins hearts; I win battles!" Without being exactly beautiful, she exercised an irresistible witchery over all who knew her. It was difficult to tear one's eyes away from this vivacious and pleasing countenance, which was capable of giving expression to feelings of grief as well as of joy. Josephine's eyes could beam with gentleness, devotion, melancholy, sensuousness, or passion. Her glance appealed to the heart as well as to the senses. Everything about her was blended into a perfect harmony, even her wanton wiles and her coquetry. There was nothing worthy of censure, not even her bad teeth, which she was clever enough to hide. She was able to laugh so bewitchingly with closed lips that no one troubled to ask why she never opened her mouth when she was amused.

Josephine's upbringing left much to be desired; it resembled that of other Creoles of her generation. She had been taught to read a little and write a little, likewise to dance and to sing. In Martinique, nothing more was required of a girl. Her ignorance might have been a serious disadvantage to her in after life, had it not been for her adroitness in turning the conversation to topics she understood, or for her discreet silence when she felt she might compromise herself. Even when she held her peace she was entrancing.

She has been the least fairly judged of all the persons who played a considerable part in the Napoleonic era. She, who knew the horrors of imprisonment, who had enjoyed the happiness of sharing the most brilliant throne

[2] She did not take the name of Josephine till she came to France. In her home she was called Rose.

with the most fêted and feared man in the world, had a charm peculiar to herself which makes us lenient to her. Nay more, we feel a profound sympathy with this woman who was compelled to sacrifice everything to politics; love, position, power, and influence. Notwithstanding her faults and her weaknesses, which were many, we are irresistibly drawn to Josephine.

Furthermore, in certain ways, we should be indulgent towards her. Her first marriage was not a happy one.[3] The Vicomte Alexandre de Beauharnais was an easy-going young fellow; vain, spendthrift, despotic, capricious. The spoiled darling of a frivolous court society, he loved every woman better than his own wife. He neglected Josephine, and plunged into a round of pleasures such as are ever available to a young officer who is filled with the joy of life, whether he be in Paris or quartered in a garrison town. He was one of those men who consider every latitude due to them, but who are eaten up with jealousy, with or without cause, even if they have no love for their wives. He soon accused Josephine of infidelity, and contested the fatherhood of her daughter Hortense, who was later to become Queen of Holland.[4] Alexandre had no ground for his accusations. Josephine, who was now twenty years old, had neither opportunity nor desire to be untrue to her marriage vows, for she loved her husband. In later years she did not take conjugal fidelity so seriously,

The young couple lived apart after Alexandre had levelled his accusation against her. Gaol reunited them. General Beauharnais, though innocent, was seized by the agents of the Terror, and ultimately found his way to the scaffold. In these days of his misfortune, Josephine rose to noble heights. Forgetting all the suffering which Alexandre had caused her, she left no stone unturned in her endeavour to obtain a pardon for her husband. Every effort was in vain. She herself was cast into prison during the spring of 1794. Separated from her children,

[3] Josephine was married on December 13, 1779, in the sixteenth year of her age. Alexandre was born in Martinique on May 28, 1760, and was, therefore, only nineteen years old when he married.

[4] Hortense was born on April 10, 1783.

Eugene and Hortense, she spent three months in one of the most horrible of the revolutionary gaols. When, on the sixth Thermidor, her husband was guillotined, she wept as sorely over his death as if he had never wronged her.

Fortune was more favourable to her than to Beauharnais. An acute access of fever (whether authentic or feigned, is not for me to say) kept Josephine a prisoner in the gaol infirmary, so that she was unable to attend the revolutionary tribunal which was to pronounce sentence of death upon her. Providence held a protective hand over this woman who was destined to wear the crown of France. During her illness, the impossible happened: Robespierre, the dictator, who had the destinies of a thousand lives in his hands each day, Robespierre himself, was hastening to his doom. He, too, had to pay for his crimes by death upon the scaffold. Thereupon the doors of the prison-houses were thrown open, and those that languished in the damp cells went forth to a new freedom. Josephine de Beauharnais was saved!

But it was her life only that was saved. Her belongings, her property, all the means she had possessed, were confiscated. She could expect nothing more in the way of endowments from her parents, for her father had passed away on November 4, 1791, leaving many debts behind him. The little that her aunt, Madame Renaudin, the mistress of Josephine's father-in-law, could give her, was not nearly enough for a woman of Josephine's tastes. She never could keep order in her finances. With true Creole indolence she always gave free rein, regardless of the state of her purse, to her ill-starred passion for ladling out money with both hands. When she had no cash left, she simply ran into debt. Even when her financial position made it possible for her to gratify every whim, she was invariably in debt to all and sundry: Napoleon, himself the soul of order, was powerless to regulate her expenditure. From time to time she would come to him in tears and show him the creditor's bills. He raged—but paid the debts! Some of Josephine's bills even followed him to Elba. When she emerged from

prison, stripped of all she possessed, her inordinate extravagance led to her ruin. Her debts were mountain high; even her servants were numbered among her creditors.

The unbridled license of society directly after the ninth Thermidor, could not fail to exercise a detrimental effect upon such a nature as Josephine's. She became an intimate friend of the beautiful but extremely frivolous Thérésia Tallien and of this lady's husband. The new circle of friends, whose main object in life was the gratification of the senses, made a strong appeal to the young Creole. Too long had she languished in the dirt and misery of the prison-house. Need we be surprised that she hurled herself into the new life with the same fervour that the whole of the French people was displaying after the days of gloom and deprivation? Stronger natures than Josephine's were sucked into the whirlpool of enjoyment. How could she, the weak and affectionate pleasure-seeker, be expected to resist the current? To-day was splendid! To-morrow death might be lurking round the next corner.

Josephine revelled in pleasure to satiety. She attended every ball, was to be seen at every concert, at the play, in public gardens and parks. She danced at the Hôtel Thélusson, at the Hôtel Longueville, at the "Tivoli," at the "Italy," in all the resorts where lovely women congregated. Thérésia Tallien, la Lionne du Directoire, the victorious beauty, was her guide and mentor.

Despite the rise in prices, Madame de Beauharnais gave dinner parties and soirées, bought Indian shawls and costly gowns. For a pair of silk stockings, she paid five hundred francs in assignats. In addition she was having her children educated. Hortense had been put to school at Madame Campan's, and Eugene was being educated in the Irish institute run by MacDermott in Saint-Germain. All these things cost money, and Madame de Beauharnais had none. She ran deeper and deeper into debt. Money and ever more money was needed. Her clothing alone, which made of her one of the best-dressed

women in Paris, was worth a fortune. In the end the spendthrift lady sought refuge in love.

Soon after her release from gaol she is supposed to have had a liaison with General Hoche, who adopted her son Eugene. This friendship, if it ever existed, did not last long, for the general quitted Paris on the eleventh Fructidor to take up his appointment as commander-in-chief of the Army of the West. Josephine was set at liberty on the nineteenth Thermidor. Though General Hoche was a prisoner under the same roof as Josephine, they could never have met during their captivity, seeing that the men and women were kept in separate quarters. Nor can we give any credence to Barras's obviously mendacious statement that Hoche's successor in Josephine's favours was the general's groom, Van Ackeren. She did not need to look so low for a lover, for there were men of standing and influence all around her towards whom she did not feel indifferent.

She came to know Barras under Thérésia Tallien's hospitable roof. He was now a representative of the people, and was soon to be the most powerful man in France. Madame Tallien was the possessor of his heart and his money-bags; but he was a connoisseur where women were concerned, he loved change and variety, and the charming Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, a wonderful creature who combined French elegance with Creole languor, could not fail to appeal to his senses. Thérésia was by no means antagonistic. Josephine was her dearest friend. The two women understood one another perfectly, and seemed made for one another's company. Both were beautiful (although Thérésia's youthful beauty far exceeded Josephine's); both were unusually complaisant; both eagerly hankered after enjoyment; both were extravagant, elegant, and spoiled; both were set on finding a man (husband or lover mattered little) who had enough money to satisfy all their needs. Thérésia was not jealous of Josephine, for she had found a wealthier substitute. Barras himself placed his former mistress in Ouvrard's arms.

Thus was Josephine relieved of any immediate anx-

iety. She did not love Barras. Sufficient pleasure could be got out of her position at the Luxembourg, where she played the queen, and where, together with Thérésia and the lovely Julie Récamier, she was one of the most courted ladies of the day. Arsène Houssaye gives us a vivid picture of the way in which the company at the Director's palace was entertained:

"Madame Tallien, Madame Beauharnais, and Madame Récamier, were (as it was then customary to say) 'dressed for the joy of the Lord God,' and, although they seemed to be naked when they made their entry into the salon, in reality each had a chlamys over her arms. So soon as the fiddlers struck up the three Graces would begin their movements. In their modicum of draperies, they would assume, now an extremely sensuous pose, and then a pose of the chastest kind, according as they draped or undraped their figures. At one moment, the garment would be a veil to hide the woman's passionate form; at another, a mere wisp, such as scantily sufficed for the very last requirements of modesty; at another it would be transformed into the girdle of Venus, which, fastened by the hand of the Graces, was unclosed by that of Cupid. . . . A more dainty spectacle could not be imagined. Not even the opera could provide such a feast. . . . The three ladies, exhausted by the dance, would often have to be carried away into a boudoir to recover, while their admirers gathered round in a veritable swarm."

Josephine's name was now on every lip. Hitherto she had resided at her aunt's. Fanny de Beauharnais was a writer, and lived in the Rue de l'Université. Now Josephine changed her quarters to a beautiful house in the Rue Chantereine (afterwards Rue de la Victoire). This had been the dwelling of the divorced wife of Talma, the celebrated actor, and his lady, Julie Carreau, let it to Josephine at a rental of four thousand francs a year. Madame de Beauharnais had her carriage and horses, her coachman, chef, doorkeeper, and chambermaid, all complete. Her salon also became a rallying-point for the notabilities of the day. Barras defrayed most of the expenses of the establishment, although he did not part

lightly with his money, seeing that he needed a goodly sum for his own uses. Instead of supplying cash, he paid in kind, and was able to procure his friend many amenities through his pull in influential quarters.

Such was Josephine's position when she made General Bonaparte's acquaintance.

There is a pretty legend current that she first became known to Napoleon through a visit paid to him by her son Eugene who had set his heart on retrieving his father's sword. Unfortunately the tale rests on very slender foundations. Napoleon knew Josephine before the fourteenth Vendémiaire, when the disarming of the sections began. He had often met her at Madame Tallien's, at Ouvrard's, or at Barras's. He could not very well have been suddenly overcome by her charms when, in order to thank him for his kindness in the matter of the sword, she paid him a personal visit.[5]

It was probably in the month of Brumaire, Year IV (November, 1795), in Madame Tallien's salon at the Chaumiére, that Napoleon and Josephine first saw one another. He singled her out from among the lovely bevy of Grecian-clad ladies. True, she was no longer in her first youth, being then thirty-three years of age—a dangerous epoch for a woman of tropical birth. But she was an adept in the art of making the best of her looks, and was able to hide any definite signs of age. Napoleon, so shy in a drawing-room, so intrepid on the battlefield, followed her movements with ardour in his gaze. "I was certainly not insensitive to womanly charms," he wrote in St. Helena, "but until then [the day when he met Josephine] I had not been spoiled by women. My character made me diffident in their company. Madame de Beauharnais was the first to make me feel a trifle more courageous. Once when we were neighbours at the dinner table, she said many flattering things about my qualities as a military man. I was intoxicated by her praise. I spoke to no one else that evening, and would not be drawn

[5] J. C. Bailleul, an acquaintance of Josephine's, declares in his *Etudes sur les causes de l'élévation de Napoléon*: "I never heard a word about this anecdote in the days of its supposed occurrence. The marriage had already been concluded before the tale became current gossip."

from her side. I was passionately in love with her, and the company became aware of the state of my feelings long before I summoned up enough courage to tell her myself."

Josephine held him captive. She troubled his senses with the witchery of her manner, and entranced him with the alluring melodiousness of her voice and the gentle appeal of her eyes. The perfume from her hair, which was dressed in Etruscan fashion, her creamy shoulders and her arms adorned with golden bracelets, intoxicated him so greatly that Josephine became for him the ideal woman. In addition she was of good family, was a viscountess, and to all seeming a wealthy woman. He saw no blemish lurking beneath the fair exterior. All he was aware of was the enchantress who could give him happiness such as was in no other woman's gift. Her slender, willowy form, which she knew so well how to drape to the best advantage in soft and clinging raiment, her graceful yet free gestures, which always remained those of a well-bred woman, be they never so free, captivated him. It never entered his head to consider whether she was older than himself. In his eyes she was young, and no powder and paint could hide the freshness and beauty of her cheeks and lips. Josephine quickly became aware of the power she wielded over the inexperienced general, and she did not fail to turn her power to account.

For some time, however, their relationship remained on a purely social footing. Napoleon was shy, and had little experience in affairs of the heart: Josephine was too calculating to allow herself to be unduly forthcoming. Bonaparte was not Barras. She foresaw that, should the young Corsican fall deeply in love, it would be a lifelong affection. He would not want her as his mistress but as his wife. She would have to belong to him, and to him alone. In a letter from Napoleon to Josephine, written at a later date, it appears that the relationship between the two soon became extremely affectionate.

After a soirée at Barras's house, at seven o'clock in the morning, Napoleon wrote: "I awake filled with thoughts of you. Your image, and yesterday's enchanting eve-

ning, have robbed me of my rest. Dear, incomparable Josephine, what a strange impression you have made on my heart! If you are vexed, or sad, or troubled, my heart aches . . . and will give your friend no rest. . . . Is it otherwise when you share your feelings with me? When I drink from your lips and heart the flames which scorch me? Ah, this night I became aware that your image can never replace you, your very self! . . . Towards noon you will awake, and three hours later I shall see you again. Meanwhile, mio dolce amor, I send you a thousand kisses—but do not return them I pray, for your kisses scorch. . . ."

At first, Madame Beauharnais did not share these strong passions. She did not fall in love with the insignificant little officer at first sight. But his soldierly bearing, his dauntless behaviour before Toulon, were known to her. When they first met, he had no great deeds to his credit, but his genius and his powers of organization led her to expect fine things of him. The thirteenth Vendémiaire, at one stroke, made him the hero of the day, and showed his military capacities in the most brilliant light. Madame de Beauharnais thought she saw a possibility of making her life secure. She needed a man whose strong arm would serve her as a prop. Barras could no longer be counted upon. He liked change. Besides, what was to become of her children? She was no young girl any more. Lovers a-many she could secure; but a husband? A husband was not to be picked up any day in any street. She seized her chance, and was not to rue the step she had decided upon.

Napoleon, however, had no thought but love in his approaches to Josephine. He adored her with all the passionate fervour of a first love, with the full ardour of his Corsican soul. Now, he would not have quarrelled with the Des Mazis of his youthful *Dialogue sur l'amour,* for he, too, was in love. Indeed, his love was of a far more fiery kind than had been that of his friend Des Mazis, whom he had considered a sick man! Napoleon married Josephine because he loved her; he married her because he loved her as only a man can love a woman. No cal-

GENERAL BONAPARTE

culations influenced him, no ambition came into play; only passion, passion in its full strength and intensity. In an undated letter which bears the legend "nine o'clock in the morning," he writes to Josephine who has apparently expressed some doubts as to the sincerity of his feelings: "So you fancy that it is not you yourself that I love? But then whom else but yourself can I love in you? Oh, Madame, I must have changed a great deal that so base a thought should have entered so pure a mind ——."

This protestation rings so true that we cannot doubt his feelings. Her past, her conduct of life, these did not matter to him; her lineage, and the fact that she was a viscountess (though they had impressed him at the outset); her intimacy with the influential Barras—no longer concerned him. Napoleon needed no protector. His detractors would have us believe that he married Josephine in order that Barras might be persuaded to entrust the Army of Italy to his command. The affair was far simpler. First of all, he did not owe his appointment to Barras or to any other influential man of the day. He was placed in the position of responsibility on his own merits. In the second place, he had been cogitating for many months past how he could set up a home of his own. He had not been able to gratify his wish either with Désirée Clary, or with Madame de la Boucharderie, or with Madame Permon. Now came this attractive Creole across his path. He loved her. She possessed every quality capable of bewitching the senses of such a character as Bonaparte's. She lived in Paris, in the city where "women knew how to love and to be loved." She must become his wife cost what it may! What cared he for the chatter of gossiping tongues? He loved her.

Josephine's sweet voice fanned the flames in Napoleon's heart to a mighty fire. His fervent protestations, which now for the first time could find expression in all their vigour and impetuosity, were something new for a lady whose ear was attuned to the airy ambiguities of Parisian drawing-rooms. Sometimes Napoleon's outspokenness appeared to her "drôle"; but she could not help feeling flattered by his passionate admiration of her

personal beauty. And he was proud when his wild outbursts of love caused her to blush—because she found his words "drôle."

Union with Josephine seemed to him the achievement of the greatest happiness. What mattered it to him that, a few weeks earlier, she had been Barras's mistress? She lost nothing in his eyes because of this; she remained for ever the incomparable, the adorable Josephine. It was many years ere this boundless love was to pale; many years ere domestic storms could break the magic circle.

On the nineteenth Ventôse (March 9, 1796), at ten o'clock in the evening, the civil marriage took place, at the registry office of the second arrondissement of Paris, between Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine de Beauharnais née Tascher de la Pagerie. The registar's office was in the house of the sometime Marquis de Gallet de Mondragon. This house, which has defied so many tempests, still stands in the Rue d'Antin, and is now used by the Paris and Netherlands Bank. The manager's office is the very room where, more than a century ago, Napoleon and Josephine were wedded.

Thus were Napoleon's dearest wishes now fulfilled; Josephine de Beauharnais became his wife.

The previous day, the marriage contract had been drawn up by the notary, Raguideau, in the presence of Citizen Lemarois, Napoleon's adjutant. Raguideau was the self-same notary who had played a part in the following little incident. One day, accompanied by her future husband, Josephine paid a visit to the notary, leaving Napoleon in the outer office, went into Raguideau's private room for her consultation. The notary strongly advised her not to contemplate marriage with a man who had no other possessions but his sword: "An unknown officer, with no future. 'Twould be better to marry an army contractor!" The "little general" overheard the notary's disparaging words, for the door between the rooms was ajar. When Josephine rejoined him, Napoleon merely observed that the lawyer seemed to be a deserving fellow, and that in the future he would

entrust his legal affairs to Raguideau's hands. Bonaparte kept his word.

In the marriage contract, the young husband declares that he has no property save his personal clothing and his accoutrements of war. Nevertheless he promises his wife a monthly income for life, amounting to fifteen hundred francs, in the event of his death—doubtless trusting to luck! He had had himself registered as general in the Army of the Interior, although since March 2nd he had been appointed to the supreme command of the Army of Italy.

That was not the only irregularity in Napoleon's and Josephine's marriage contract. Josephine, who was close upon thirty-three years old, entered the date of her birth as June 3, 1767, thus making herself out to be four years younger than she really was. Napoleon, however, found that he was rather too young to be the husband of a nine-and-twenty-year-old woman, so he added eighteen months to his age, and entered the date of his birth as January 5, 1768. The authenticity of these statements was not questioned; no investigations were made either in Corsica or in Martinique. Josephine never thought at the time of her marriage that the false entry might some day prove to be a dangerous weapon in the hands of those who wished to contrive her divorce. Napoleon once observed during his days on St. Helena, when referring to his first spouse: "Poor Josephine involved herself in a peck of troubles by her false statement. That one entry alone was enough to declare our union null and void." In addition, one of the witnesses, Captain Lemarois, was not yet of age. The other witnesses were Barras, Tallien, and a Monsieur Calmelet, an old acquaintance of Josephine's. The bridegroom signed the contract, his hand tremulous with excitement, "Napolione Buonaparte."

That same day he made his entry into his wife's house in the Rue Chantereine. Considering his financial position, it was a very fine home. From the garden, a short flight of steps led to a long dining-hall, which gave access to a boudoir with tessellated panels on the left hand, and to a small study on the right. At the end of the corridor

on the ground floor was a drawing-room with French windows opening on to the garden. A stairway led up to the private apartments, which consisted of a salon and two other rooms. One of the latter had its walls entirely covered with mirrors. This was the bedchamber. Connected therewith was a delightful little dressing-room whose walls were adorned with paintings of birds and flowers.

General Bonaparte did not notice that some of the furniture was not on a level with the elegance of the dwelling, that here and there an item was lacking, or that the threadbare condition of much of the upholstery gave the lie to the apparent opulence of the owner. All he saw was the sumptuousness. Even had he perceived the poverty underlying the superficial splendor, he would have remained indifferent. He had not married Josephine for money, but for herself. She, who now stood before him in her rose-coloured silk gown, which clung so gracefully to her slender body, she was his, his alone! Passionately, he drew her towards him: ardently he pressed his lips to hers, then he kissed her throat, her shoulders. His cheek touched the medal which hung by a little chain round her neck: a gift from the bridegroom, upon which he had engraved the words: "Au destin!"

Napoleon's happiness would have been complete had it not been for Josephine's lap-dog, " le vilain Fortuné." The spoiled darling had taken up his usual place in his mistress's bed. "You see this gentleman," said Bonaparte to Arnault in later days, pointing to Fortuné, "he took possession of Madame's bed on our wedding night. I was merely informed that either I should have to sleep elsewhere or share my lady's couch with him. Not a very pleasant alternative ! I had to take it or leave it. The dog was less accommodating than I ! " Fortuné actually bit the bridegroom's leg. Still, even this tiresome condition was borne complaisantly, because Josephine desired things to be thus. Later on, Napoleon became reconciled to Fortuné. On July 17, 1796, he wrote from Marmirolo: "Millions of kisses, also for Fortuné, in spite of his nasty behaviour."

Only a few hours were granted Napoleon to yield himself to the joys of love. Two days of life with his beloved, and then the bugles summoned him to battle. Brokenhearted, he tore himself away from the wife he adored and idolized. But he parted from her knowing in his heart that he would achieve great things ; and that, before many days went by, his deeds would wring a cry of admiration from her lips. To be loved and admired by Josephine, seemed to him the acme of joy and glory. He took his departure, accompanied by the sweetest memories. He pictured Josephine in her room of mirrors, saw her delicate shoulders, her slender body, her dainty head, and "covered all these beauties with thousands of kisses."

On his way to the front, he had to pass through Marseilles where he visited his mother. Now, for the first time, he told her of his marriage. Letizia could not give her approval to the union; her daughter-in-law seemed far too old for her son. She would have much preferred him to marry Désirée. Napoleon likewise paid a visit to his erstwhile love, in order that, in person, he could beg her forgiveness for any suffering he might have caused her by his marriage. Then he travelled to Nice, the headquarters of the Army of Italy. On March 26, 1796, the young man stepped forward on his road to the glory and fame which awaited him and his soldiers in the plains of Lombardy.

II

What was glory, however, without Josephine? In his anguish at their separation, Napoleon wrote her the most glowing letters, while bullets whistled round his head. Longing seized him. His love grew even more passionate, now that she was far away. He took every opportunity to write to his beloved; a change of horses was sufficient excuse for him to seize his pen. Perhaps Josephine might lack money : "I wrote you from Châtillon and sent you a power of attorney, so that you might draw on certain sums now falling due to me. . . . Every moment increases the distance between us, most adorable

of women; and every moment makes it more difficult for me to bear the separation. You are always in my thoughts. My imagination grows weary with trying to conceive what you are doing from hour to hour. . . . Write soon; a long letter, my dear, and accept a thousand kisses from the tenderest and most sincere of lovers."

Again, from Port-Maurice on April 3rd, he writes: "I have received all your letters, but none have made so deep an impression on me as the last. . . . What feelings you arouse in me! You are a flame which scorches my poor heart. My one and only Josephine, away from you I know not joy. Away from you, the world is a desert wherein I stand alone without having the sweet relief of letting my heart's feelings overflow. You have robbed me of more than my heart. You are the one thought of my life. . . . What have you done to bind me soul and body to you thus? To live for Josephine! That is my whole life's aim. I long to be near you, I faint with longing to be near you. Madman that I am! I do not notice that every minute I am farther from you. How long will it be before you read these lines, feebly expressing the pulses of my heart, wherein you reign supreme. Ah, adorable woman, I know not what fate holds in store for me; but if I am to be kept away from you much longer, I shall not be able to bear it. I am not brave enough! At one time I could boast of my courage. . . . But now, the thought that my Josephine may be ill, and, in especial, the horrible fancy that she may not love me much after all, weigh upon my spirit, make me sad, and do not even leave me sufficient courage to despair. I often say to myself, mankind has no power over him who dies fearlessly. But now, to die without your love, to die without being sure of your love, that would be the torture of the damned. . . . The day, my one and only companion (the companion whom destiny has chosen to walk beside me on the difficult journey through life)—the day when I no longer possess your heart, that day will be my last in this world. . . ."

While Napoleon was speeding from victory to victory, while he was taking the world by storm, while town after

town hailed him as the liberator of Italy, his ardent Corsican heart, which for the first time felt the pangs of a true love, suffered unbearable anguish at the separation from the beloved. Her image hovered round him day and night. The noise of battle and the shouts of victory were not able to chase her from his thoughts. With Josephine's picture in his heart, he spurred on his soldiers to incredible deeds of valor, and filled them with a frenzy of victory; for Josephine he won battles, for her he conquered towns and territories, everything was for her. Love for her and love for immortal fame were his inseparable companions.

But Josephine was left behind. Josephine, the weak woman, craving for the full enjoyment of her life, was alone in Paris, the great city, the temptress city. Such flaming words of love as were contained in Napoleon's letters were incomprehensible to her. She did not feel like Napoleon. The yearning which was near to killing him, found no echo in her heart. Either she wrote not at all, or else her letters were cold and formal. Napoleon, on the other hand, thought of her day and night; he almost came to execrate fame and glory, which kept him away from her side. He wrote: "No day passes without my loving you, no night goes by without my folding you in my arms. . . . I curse fame and ambition, which are separating me from the soul of my life. In all I undertake, whether it be business affairs, or leading my troops to battle, you are with me, everywhere, everywhere, my adorable Josephine. You alone possess my mind and heart. . . . Ah, how could you write so coldly! And between the 23rd and 26th are four days! What were you doing, not to write to your husband?"

Four days were an eternity for a man who wrote almost every day. Missive after missive flew to her in Paris, each one more insistently urging her to come to Milan in order to share in his happiness and glory. Napoleon's longing for his beloved wife became increasingly passionate: "Come quickly. . . . If you hesitate, you will find me an ill man. The fatigues of my present life combined with your absence: that is too much for me!"

He begs, he prays, he is well-nigh moved to jealousy because Junot (who has been entrusted to hand over twenty-two captured colours to the Directory) will be in Paris, and will have the joy of seeing Josephine. Then again, hope fills him: perhaps she will make the journey to Italy when this messenger returns. "You must come with him, do you understand," he writes on April 24, 1796. "Should I be so unlucky as to see him coming back alone, I should be inconsolable. He will be seeing you, my adorable one; he will breathe the same air as yourself! Maybe that you will be granting him the unique and priceless privilege of kissing your cheek! But I—I shall be far away, far away from you. But you will come with him, won't you? You will be soon at my side, against my heart, enfolded in my arms. Take wings to yourself and come, come! Travel in comfort, for the way is long, bad and wearying. . . . My beloved, may I be often in your thoughts. . . ."

What solicitude, and yearning, and hope! What boundless love emanates from these words! A sign of life from Josephine, and Napoleon would become the happiest of mortals. But she neither writes nor comes. She finds it "drôle" that her husband should want her to follow him in his wars. The love which she has inspired in this man, a love which places her above fame, is characterized by her as "drôle." Doubtless she is flattered by all the honours which are showered upon her as General Bonaparte's wife. But go and join him in Italy? Never! Josephine remained unmoved by letters which any other woman would have been proud to receive, letters which Madame de Rémusat described as so passionate in tone, so strongly felt, so turbulent and yet so poetical in expression, in a word, so utterly different from the usual love outpourings. Josephine could only smile at such conjugal love. It seemed to her "drôle" that a man should love his wedded wife!

Napoleon, however, with his strict Corsican views, took marital responsibility very seriously. His code of morals prescribed that a man should love his wife and be loved by her. He, who had never experienced such a love as

the one that was now consuming him, placed his passion and his need to love and be loved on such a lofty plane and in so glaring a light that they were quite outside Josephine's orbit of comprehension. If, during these first months of wedlock, she had understood Napoleon, she could have attached his unspoiled heart to her for life. Had she been able to reciprocate his love in those early days, Napoleon would probably not have loosened the bonds of marriage for reasons of State. But Josephine loved her life and her amusements better than she loved her husband. She enjoyed herself immensely in beautiful, gay Paris, in the city which so admirably suited her Creole inconstancy, the city which she was so loth to quit. Was she, indeed, to follow her husband and share in the turmoil of a battlefield? Had Monsieur de Beauharnais ever expected such a thing from her? Certainly she was entitled to a share of the glory which Bonaparte's genius and capacity had earned for him! But she could enjoy her share far better in Paris, where she was fêted in honour of the conqueror, and where she played the leading part! The Parisians called her Notre Dame des Victoires, and just as in earlier days they had acclaimed Thérésia Tallien as Notre Dame de Thermidor.

Away in Italy, fame and honour awaited Josephine, and a beautiful old palace had been placed at her disposal by Prince Serbelloni. Love, devotion, tenderness, passion, were for her to enjoy if she would but come to Milan. But none of these things could compensate her for leaving Paris. She would have disdained the most splendid castles the world had to offer. Her little house in the Rue Chantereine was her paradise. Paris! Paris! Every pulse of her heart riveted her more closely to Paris. But in the end she had to give way despite her protestations, her tears, and her pretended pregnancy.

For Napoleon never ceased his entreaties. One may, however, detect a certain uneasiness in his letters; in addition to the love and the unquenchable passion they express, there is a suspicion that Josephine loves him less. This thought follows him about like a spectre. He takes Marmont into his confidence, and, with the imaginative

enthusiasm of youth, he tells his friend of his love for Josephine. He was tortured to find a reason for his wife's reluctance to come to him, and at last was assailed by jealousy. A terrible dread haunted him. One day a miniature of Josephine painted by Isabey, a picture he always had about his person, fell to the ground. The glass was smashed. Napoleon, who was ever superstitious, paled, and said to his adjutant: "Marmont, my wife is either ill or unfaithful!"

Ill or unfaithful! Certainly Josephine was not ailing; on the contrary, her health had never been better. But she must find a pretext which would excuse her refusal to join her husband. How could she appear even more interesting and desirable in a young husband's eyes than by confiding to him the sweet secret that an hour of travail was before her? These tidings filled Napoleon with ecstacy. A child! To have a child! To have a child by her, the most beautiful, the best, the most adorable of women! But his first transports were dimmed by despair and remorse that he should have been importunately urging a sick woman to undertake a perilous journey. What was he to do. He was torn between joy and grief. The letter he wrote to Josephine from Tortona on June 15th will best show his feelings:

"My life is an unbroken vision of terror. A horrible dread has seized me. I no longer live. My life, my happiness, my peace of mind, are no more. I am without hope. I am sending you a messenger who is to remain no more than four hours in Paris, and is to bring me back news of you. Write me but a dozen lines; lines that will bring me a little comfort. . . . You are ill! You love me! I have saddened you. You are with child, but I cannot see you. . . . I have done you an injustice, and I do not know how I can ever make up to you for it. I reproach you for remaining in Paris, and you are ill. Forgive me, my dear. The love you have made me feel for you had robbed me of understanding. . . . My forebodings are so dreadful that I would throw up everything for a sight of you, to press you to my heart, were it but for a couple of hours, and then, with you, to die! Who is seeing after you? I hope

you have asked Hortense to be with you. From the moment it occurred to me that she could be a comfort to you these days, I began to love the delightful child a thousand times more than ever before. But for me there is no consolation, no rest, no hope. I shall only become calm again when my messenger returns, and when, in a long letter, you have told me your needs and how long your indisposition will last. If your state of health causes the least anxiety, I shall come to Paris immediately. My advent will cure you. . . . Josephine, how could you leave me so long without a sign? Your last letter is dated the 3rd of this month. It makes me sad, but I carry it about with me. Your image and your letters are ever before my eyes.

"I am nothing without you. I find it hard to believe I ever lived at all without you. Ah, Josephine! If you knew my heart you would not have postponed your journey from the 29th to the 16th. Or have given heed to the words of disloyal friends who would fain separate us. I am suspicious of everyone—that is to say, of everyone who comes in contact with you. . . .

"Josephine! If you love me . . . take care of yourself. . . . All my thoughts are with you, in your bedchamber, in your bed, close to your heart. . . . You, you, and always you! The remainder of the world does not exist for me. I am athirst for honours, because you thirst for them; for victory, because you take delight in it. Were it otherwise, I should long ago have hastened back to you and thrown myself at your feet. Sometimes I say to myself: I am disquieting myself without cause; perhaps she is already better, she may have started on the journey, by now she is possibly in Lyons. Idle madness! You are lying in bed, ill, suffering; yet you are for this very reason more beautiful, more interesting, more adorable. You are pale. Your eyes are more languishing than ever. When do you expect to be well again? Why on earth could not I be the sick one instead of you? Being stronger and more courageous, I should have borne the illness easier. . . . I am a little consoled by the thought that, even though fate has doomed you to a bed of sickness, no one can compel me to survive you.

"Tell me when you write, dear love, that you are convinced that I love you better than anything else in the world, that every moment of my life belongs to you, that never an hour goes by without my thinking of you, that I have no thoughts to give to other women, that other women are bereft of charm, and beauty, and intelligence, that you, and you alone, just as you are, are pleasing to me and completely possess my heart, that there is no corner of my heart which is hidden from you, no thought of mine that does not belong to you . . . and that the day when you should cease to live will be my last day likewise. Nature, the earth, these are beautiful because you are there. If you do not believe me, if your heart is not convinced of and permeated with all I say, then you will indeed make me sorrowful, for I shall know that you do not love me. . . . I could not bear that you should love another, or should give yourself to another. To see him would be to destroy him ! And then—then should I lay my hand upon your divine person . . .? No ! I should never dare do that. But I should leave a world in which the most virtuous creature had deceived me.

"But I am sure of your love, and proud of it. Unhappiness is the touchstone which shall make the strength of our passion manifest. A child, as delightful as its mother ! A child will see the light of day, and will for many years be folded in your arms ! Oh, unhappy wretch that I am I would be content with but one day. A thousand kisses on your eyes, your lips, your heart, my adorable wife!"

His desire and his longing for the beloved are, however stronger than his sympathy for her physical weakness. He pours out all his love and solicitude at her feet. He, the victor, who was overwhelmed with honours, to whom the loveliest women opened their arms, disdained both homage and love. All he desired was Josephine; before her he prostrated himself as before a saint. He who dictated his terms to the Pope, to the Austrian ruler, and to the Italian princes, is as weak before this one woman as the humblest of his servants.

In the end Josephine had to give way. After a final supper party given by Barras in the Luxembourg, she

left Paris on June 24th, accompanied by Junot, Murat, and Joseph Bonaparte. She started out as if she were going forward to meet the gravest misfortune. Napoleon's brow was already covered with the laurels of Montenotte, Millesimo, Mondovi, Lodi, and Cremona, so that his wife's journey to Italy was a succession of triumphant receptions, and she seemed to be almost as great a conqueror as her husband.

Yet, for all that, nothing could compensate her for leaving Paris. Luckily she found one among her travelling companions who was able to chase her blackest thoughts away. This was Monsieur Hippolyte Charles. He was a merry and agreeable young fellow who had the knack of ingratiating himself with ladies of a pleasure-seeking disposition. Josephine was nowise reluctant to make use of the young officer, and to while away the weary hours in his company.

But, in Italy, Napoleon was impatiently awaiting the hour when he could clasp his darling in his arms. He allowed a few jealous words to escape him in his letters to her; these were written rather to tease her than to be taken seriously. It never entered his thoughts that his wife could be consoling herself for having to leave Paris by an intrigue with Hippolyte Charles.

Now she had arrived ! Marmont had awaited her in Turin, had conducted her in safety to Milan, and had seen her installed in the Serbelloni Palace. Here Napoleon welcomed her with open arms. Forgotten were all the regrets that she had not come earlier ! She herself, the unique, was there ! Passionate youth so easily forgets grief when true love enters in. Josephine, who might have expected reproaches, found nothing but love, love amid the turmoil of war. Marmont says, "When, at long last, Josephine arrived in Milan, General Bonaparte was very happy. He lived for her alone. Never have I known a purer, more honourable, or greater love fill any man's heart."

All too soon, duty (or, rather, Wurmser) called Napoleon to the battlefield. Josephine was to come to Verona, but the stench of powder and the roar of guns

made her turn back when she got as far as Brescia. This time, the enforced separation hurt her, and she wept. Napoleon, whose passion flowed in fuller tide now that she was near him, comforted her with the words: "Wurmser will have to pay dearly for your tears!" And he kept his troth.

Out of sight out of mind! No sooner was Josephine back in Milan than she thought as little about her husband as she had in Paris. Soon there gathered round her a galaxy of young officers who eagerly paid homage to the spouse of their victorious commander. Most of them were experts in the art of turning coquettish women's heads, and Madame Bonaparte revelled in her bliss. Hippolyte Charles paid her his respects in the Palazzo Serbelloni. No sooner was Napoleon's back turned than the young coxcomb found his way into Madame's house. He was astute and entertaining with a "bon mot" ready on his tongue, a past master at phrasing a pretty compliment: in a word he was one of those pleasant chatterboxes who always succeed in playing a leading part in the drawing-room or boudoir. He was dainty, and pretty to look at, carefully groomed, a bit of a dandy. Cheeky and self-confident, he would let his dark eyes roam and sparkle. But, above all, he would gaze long and earnestly at Josephine's graceful figure and love-provoking face. Stendhal once said: "Entertain a woman well, and she is yours!" So it was with Josephine, and young Charles became a conqueror.

The whole army, the whole town, knew of this liaison, and of Madame Bonaparte's indifference towards her husband. But Napoleon's love was full of trust, and he looked upon every report concerning Josephine's disloyalty as the basest of slanders. She loved him! How could she, who was all goodness and gentleness and virtue, play him false? How could she betray him who loved her so well, how could she be so unfaithful to him for the sake of an impudent fop? No, such a thing was impossible!

But the rumours which come to his ears grow ever more definite. His adjutants, his brothers, his mother,

his sisters distil the poison of jealousy drop by drop into his hitherto trusting heart. Forebodings of the most hateful kind take possession of him, forebodings similar to those whereby he was assailed in the days when Josephine kept him waiting for her advent in Milan. This time his premonition is more oppressive and more persistent; there are better reasons for suspicion. Josephine does not write. Why not? She has nothing else to do. Has she really found a lover? How horrible! The young general is seized with jealousy. Tentatively, and half in jest, in order not to do an injustice to his beloved lest after all she be innocent, he lets her have a glimpse of the true state of his feelings when he writes from Verona on September 17, 1796:

"Farewell, my adorable Josephine. One of these nights your bedroom door will be torn open as if by a jealous lover, and in the next moment I shall be lying in your arms. A thousand ardent kisses."

At last, at long last, her silence is broken. Her letters give him the intensest joy. The exertions and excitements of the battlefield have laid him low, and he is ill; fever makes his mind wander. But Josephine's words are balsam to his spirit, increase the fever though they may. "I have received your letters, have pressed them to lips and heart, and all my anguish at our separation has vanished! The miles which sever us no longer existed, and I saw you beside me. You were neither capricious nor angry; on the contrary, you were gentle and tender, inspired with that divine goodness which is the special quality of my Josephine. A dream! Judge whether it could cure me of my fever. . . ."

Josephine's letters, on the other hand, were cold. They were not such as could bring peace to Napoleon's passionate nature. He found in them no response to the fires which were searing in his heart. "Your letters are as cold . . . as those one might write after fifty years of wedlock. They contain no more than the friendship suitable to life's winter. For shame, Josephine! . . . That is bad, that is unkind. What more can you do to make me the most pitiable of men? Cease to love me? You have

already done so. Hate me? I should prefer this, for everything degrades, save hate alone. . . ." Then the words of love burst forth anew: "Thousands and thousands of kisses as tender as my heart."

Nevertheless, trust has taken wings. He is filled with uneasiness and well-grounded misgiving. A few days later, Napoleon reiterates his complaints of her indifference and her silence. His letters are full of anger, sorrow, irony, love, suffering, and passion. On November 13th (the third Frimaire of the Year V), he writes, again from Verona: "I no longer love you, I hate you. You are hateful, inept, stupid, mean. You do not write to me. You no longer love your husband. You know how happy your letters make him, and yet you don't take the trouble to write a few lines.

"What are you doing all day, Madame? What important business makes it impossible for you to write to the man who loves you? What new love can have quenched and put away the love, the tender and constant love, you promised to give him? Who is the fairy prince that claims all your time, . . . so that you cannot write to your husband. Take care, Josephine! Some fine night, the door will burst open—and I shall be there!

"Quite seriously, I am uneasy, my pretty one, at not hearing from you. Do write me four pages full of sweet words which will warm my heart with joy and happiness. In a few days I hope to clasp you in my arms and to cover you with a million kisses, hot as the equator."

In truth the day on which he was to see Josephine dawned very soon. Intoxicated with victories, still covered with the dust of battle, Napoleon returned to Milan, anticipating that she, the one and only beloved, would press the loveliest of laurel crowns upon his brow, and thus compensate him for all the toil and danger of the fight. With beating heart, he hastened to her apartments in order, with a cry of joy, to throw himself at her feet. Disappointment, bitter, unutterable disappointment awaited him. The rooms were empty! "Josephine! Josephine!" She, who should have taken wings to her feet that her greeting might reach him the quicker, she

was not there. She had gone to Genoa, gone away with Hippolyte Charles. This time Napoleon was forced to believe. No further doubts were possible.

He writes brokenheartedly: "I reach Milan, I hasten to your house, having thrown aside everything, so that I may see you and clasp you in my arms. . . . You are not there. . . . You are amusing yourself in towns where festivities are being given. You go away, just when I come. You care nothing for your Napoleon. A whim led you to give him your love, and now fickleness has made you indifferent.—The blow which has befallen me is incalculable. I have not deserved it.

"I shall tarry here until the 9th. Don't put yourself about, amuse yourself, happiness is made for you. All the world is happy to have the chance of pleasing you. Your husband alone is most unhappy."

Napoleon wanders about the great, empty rooms which are still redolent of Josephine's presence. All night long he paces to and fro. On tables and in drawers he finds articles belonging to the faithless woman. His heart is tortured with the certainty that she has betrayed him.

Yet on the morrow he is almost ready to forgive her. Josephine has written to Berthier to explain that she has been too busy attending gay functions to send news of herself before. This suffices Napoleon. He is nearly brought to ask pardon for having hurt her feelings. A look of surrender spreads over his face. He no longer implores Josephine to give him her love: "I am not worth your giving yourself the trouble. The happiness or unhappiness of a man whom you have ceased to love makes no claim on your interest."

His whole endeavour is to see that Josephine is happy, to love her, to avoid displeasing her. He closes his letter with the words: "Farewell, adorable wife, farewell my Josephine." He seals the missive, but tears it open again: "I open my letter once more, to send you a kiss. . . . Ah, Josephine . . . Josephine!"

In this last cry from his heart, we sense the full volume of his feelings and of his fathomless grief. Nothing was held back from him now, and he had to listen to the

whole tale of his dear lady's misdeeds. Unutterable torture! He had imagined this marriage of his to contain every element of happiness: love, devotion, trust, fidelity. But his hopes were dashed by her upon whose altar he had consecrated his great love. Josephine was untrue. The profound bitterness of an unhappy man who still loves the woman by whom he has been betrayed, is mirrored in his letters. His heart is wounded, he calls aloud for love and consolation. If Josephine were only at his side, she would, in spite of all that had happened, know how to comfort him. But she is in Genoa!

The Duchess of Abrantes informs us that Napoleon meant to have his rival shot. As commander-in-chief he could easily have found a pretext for the execution. But he never really contemplated such a revenge. He had other means to his hand. On the ground that Charles had had dealings with army contractors, the young man's name was struck off the army list and he was sent back to Paris.

From the day when Napoleon knew that Josephine had played him false, knew that all his tenderness had been poured into an empty heart—from that day his love for his wife lost its passionate note. He forgave her; he wanted nothing better than to forgive her. She was still his ideal, the only woman who reigned as sovereign queen in his heart. But the fires were no longer as bright as heretofore; his illusions were shattered.

Josephine, on the contrary, now began to love him. The cooler his passion, the more jealous she became. In her anxiety, she turned to Berthier, who was daily at the general's side and must certainly know all his sentiments. Berthier answered her on February 11, 1797: "I am so devoted to you that I should certainly let you know if Bonaparte harboured the slightest anger. I promise you he has nothing against you. He loves you, worships you. He is unhappy that such fancies should lead you to believe what does not exist. I have never been away from the general during the whole course of the campaign. Be easy in your mind. I swear to you, by all I hold sacred, that he has always and always loved you and you alone,

and has no other thought than of you. No other woman is loved and revered as you. How often has he said to me: 'You will own, my dear Berthier, that I am very unhappy. I am madly in love with my wife. I can think only of her. And yet, see how wrongly she has dealt by me. . . .' Never fear, Bonaparte loves you truly. Do not torment yourself needlessly. Do not thrust this love away. . . . How you wrong him!"

III

In December 1797, Napoleon returned to Paris, and took up his quarters in the house in the Rue Chantereine, which had been renamed in his honour Rue de la Victoire. He came from Rastatt, and was acclaimed as hero, as the liberator of Italy. Balls and festivities of every kind were given to welcome him. His name was on every lip. All Paris lay at the feet of the man of genius whose military talents had brought about such wonderful results.

But his stay in the capital did not last long. In May 1798 he was again to take up arms. Was not war his profession? Placed at the head of the Army of Egypt, fate decreed that he should seek the shores of the Nile and in sight of the Pyramids, those giants of stone, prove once more the greatness of his military ability.

Josephine accompanied her husband as far as Toulon. The parting was grievous to her, and she wept genuine tears at the uncertainty of the future and what it might hold for Napoleon. He, too, knew not when or if ever he would return from the unknown country. His solicitude for Josephine's welfare had seen to everything. Before leaving Paris he had arranged for her to have an allowance of forty-thousand francs, and had asked his brother Joseph to see that the sum was paid to her regularly. To do Josephine justice, she had honestly intended to accompany her husband on this campaign; but Napoleon fully realized the madness of acceding to her wish. He was about to engage in an enterprise whose issue he himself was totally ignorant of; nor could he guess the dangers it might involve. Josephine, therefore stayed

behind in France, bathing in the waters at Plombières in the hope of putting an end to her barrenness. Here she met with an accident. A balcony she was standing on gave way, and she was so seriously hurt that she had to stay in Plombières far longer than she had originally intended. Then she returned to Paris.

Meanwhile, on the "Orient," Napoleon sailed towards fresh victories and greater renown. During the voyage he was fully occupied with his plans for the conquest of Egypt and of Syria. His genius conceived of increasingly comprehensive and colossal plans, and his indefatigable mental activity was ceaselessly at work. "Yet in spite of all," says Bourrienne, "he had a good few corners in his head for Josephine!" He spoke of her daily.

Early in July 1798 he landed in Alexandria. Hardly had his foot touched Egyptian soil than disquietiing news of Josephine was brought to him. For a second time, she had succumbed to Hippolyte's charms. In Malmaison (which she bought at a later date from Monsieur de Moley for two hundred twenty-five thousand francs, though only fifteen thousand francs of the purchase money were every paid over) she lived with her lover, taking no precautions to conceal her happiness. She was to be seen in the park surrounding the mansion leaning on his arm, walking in the moonlight, breakfasting with him, spending the whole day in his company. Hippolyte made himself at home in Malmaison. The neighbors surmised that Madame Bonaparte had her son or her younger brother staying with her. But Eugene de Beauharnais was with General Bonaparte on the shores of the Nile; and as for a younger brother, Josephine had none. In Paris, where she was better known, people soon found out who the mysterious young man was. Charles, who had been discharged from the Army of Italy by Napoleon, had now, by Josephine's good offices, become a partner in a grocery and provision business. According to Barras, she is supposed to have lavished "immense sums of money on him, even given him jewellery as to a strumpet." Good friends, relations, and acquaintances did

not hesitate to let the wronged husband know of all these goings-on as soon as possible. The whole clan of the Bonapartes, from the mother to the youngest sister, the sisters-in-law, and even little Jerome, saw to it that no detail of his wife's behaviour should escape Napoleon's knowledge. Nor was the information they imparted always within the bounds of truth. Josephine's misconduct was made the most of by Napoleon's family, for each and every one of his relatives hated her.

Napoleon was sore hit by the tidings. His uneasiness is first noticeable in the letters to Joseph, to whom he always confided his troubles. On July 25, 1798, he writes: "I have a great deal of trouble at home; the veil has been pulled aside once for all. . . . Your affection is very dear to me: only one thing could increase my bitterness—if I were to lose you, if you also were to play the traitor. How terrible that all my affections should be concentrated upon a single individual. . . . See to it that, on my return, I shall have a house in the country, either in the vicinity of Paris or else in Burgundy. I should like to pass the winter there in complete seclusion. I am sick of mankind. I need peace and solitude. Greatness bores me: my sensibilities are blunted. . . ."

Napoleon even confides his heartache to Eugene, Josephine's son, the youngest of his adjutants. The lad is only seventeen years of age, but he feels it his duty (in so far as his love for his mother and his filial respect will allow) to remind his frivolous parent of the wrong she is doing the general. Later in the Egyptian campaign, Eugene was in the painful position, as Napoleon's adjutant, of having to accompany his mother's husband when he went driving with his mistress "Bellilote" Fourès. But Napoleon became aware of the young man's embarrassment, and dispensed him from this duty.

Junot was mainly responsible, however, for Bonaparte's enlightenment in the matter of Josephine's infidelity. He had witnessed the flirtation between her and Charles on the journey from Paris to Milan. Nay, he himself, had aroused the interest of the general's lady.

"One day in February 1799,[6]" writes Bourrienne, "I saw Bonaparte pacing up and down with Junot in front of El Arish. . . . The general's face was even paler than usual. His features twitched nervously, his eyes were restless, and from time to time he clapped his hand to his brow. When he had talked for a quarter of an hour with Junot, he came over to me. I had never seen him so upset. . . . 'You don't care for me at all,' he cried in a severe and angry voice. 'Women! . . . Josephine! . . . If you were devoted to me, you would have informed me of all Junot has been telling me. He at least, is a friend. Josephine! . . . And I am more than two thousand miles away. . . . You ought to have told me all. . . . Josephine! How could she have played me false? . . . She! . . . Woe to her! I will destroy this nest of coxcombs and dandies. . . . I'll get a divorce. Yes, a divorce. . . . A public, a sensational divorce. I'll write to Joseph about it at once. . . . I know all there is to know. . . . '"

Junot's zeal for communication had certainly outstripped his knowledge of the facts, and Napoleon gave readier credence to all his adjutant said because his confidence in Josephine had already been shaken. The words recorded by Bourrienne are, indeed, the last flames of a passion whose fires would never have died down if they had found more sustenance upon the hearth where they had been kindled. Henceforward Napoleon's love did not belong exclusively to Josephine. In Italy, the most beautiful women, even Grassini, had aroused no interest in him who had eyes and feelings for Josephine alone, who lived for her alone, who strove for honour and glory only that he might lay all his victories at her feet. Hitherto he had refused to take part in the amusements of camp life; now for the first time he allowed himself to be stirred by other women. On his return from Acre, the fair Bellilote (Pauline Fourès) was to give him renewed consolation in his conjugal unhappiness.

Events in Egypt kept Napoleon away from France for a year and a half. Day by day the political situation at

[6] Bourrienne makes a slip here. The conversation must have taken place in July 1798, at about the date of Napoleon's letter to Joseph.

home became more desperate. The rule of the Directory was causing great discontent throughout the country, and the nation now placed all its hopes in the young general, whose fame had spread to the farthest confines of Asia. His return was eagerly awaited. He was the saviour who should lift his people out of their misery. When at last, on the seventeenth Vendémiaire (October 9, 1799) Napoleon quite unexpectedly landed at Fréjus, the whole of France gave a sigh of relief in the conviction that the general would prove a pillar of strength.

No such feeling of emancipation and relief was to fill Josephine's faithless heart. She laboured under a consciousness of guilt. Her husband's return made her tremble at the thought of the scene before her. Eugene and others had informed her that Napoleon knew everything, and had even spoken of having her divorced. But divorce did not enter Josephine's calculations. No Monsieur Charles, be he never so charming and seductive, could compensate her for the loss of a General Bonaparte whose name and great deeds filled the world with jubilation. She was determined to safeguard her position as spouse of this much fêted campaigner. Perhaps she still fancied that it would be easy to placate her husband in spite of the wrong she had done him. Josephine had confidence in the influence she had formerly exercised over Napoleon; she trusted in the magic of her presence, which had always softened his heart towards her. She must see him alone, before his family could poison his ears with further revelations; she must conquer him anew. Surely he would forgive everything when she was once more at his side, when she lay once more in his arms?

On the nineteenth Vendémiaire, Josephine set out from Paris. She hoped to meet her husband in Lyons. Fate willed otherwise. Bonaparte had already left the town ere his wife arrived; he went northward by the Bourbonnais road, while she drove southward by the Burgundian. Disappointed, and filled with despair, Josephine returned to Paris. Too late! Napoleon had arrived forty-eight hours before, at six o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fourth Vendémiaire. The doors of calumny had

been open for two days! Her enemies had not wasted their time, but had utilized every minute in order to prejudice the general against his wife.

When, at length, Josephine reached her house in the Rue de la Victoire, she found the doors closed against her. Closed, too, was Napoleon's heart. He refused to hold any converse with her, and forbade her to set foot in his room. But the fires in his heart had not been completely extinguished; there was still a spark left. The gentlest breath of tenderness from Josephine, a glance from her misty eyes, the sound of her soft voice, could kindle that spark anew and fan it to a flame. Napoleon dreaded lest this should happen. He wished to remain firm; no matter how difficult and painful his resolve might prove, he was determined to keep his heart hardened against the woman he had loved so passionately.

Josephine's tears, her pleadings, her protestations, were of no avail. Napoleon remained obdurate. For three days he had withstood her. One thing was left to her as a means whereby she might soften him—her children. Eugene and Hortense, whom he loved, to whom he had been a second father—they would appeal to him on her behalf. He would not be able to resist them.

And Josephine's surmise was correct. On the evening of the third day, Eugene and Hortense came weeping to Napoleon in his room and besought his clemency for their unhappy mother. How could he wound these innocents, and turn a deaf ear to their petition? Napoleon was conquered. The young people ran out to call their mother. They led her into Bonaparte's room. Conscience-stricken, full of remorse, self-surrendering, and beseeching for pardon, Josephine approached her husband. Her face bore the traces of recent tears. He opened wide his arms and folded Josephine to his heart. She was forgiven. Since she was fond of concluding such things with a swoon, she now fainted in his embrace. With the utmost precaution, as though she were very ill, Napoleon laid her on the bed. Grief and suffering were forgotten. Did he not look upon adultery as "une affaire de canapé"? In his heart of hearts he may have considered himself to

EMPRESS JOSEPHINE
After an engraving by Huguet

blame for his wife's infidelity. He should not have left her all alone; he should have been there to watch over her, as in later days he watched over Marie Louise. He had no lofty faith in woman's constancy. Was he worthy of reproach for his opinion? What kind of women had he known? The women of the revolution and the Directory had not provided him with very fine samples of steadfastness and unapproachability. They hurled themselves into every pleasure, enjoyed every gratification of the senses, and were not fastidious. So it was he forgave Josephine. He made but one stipulation: she must never see Hippolyte Charles again.

Yes, Napoleon forgave her, but he could not forget her betrayal. He felt no further obligation towards her, and henceforward he sought love when and where it pleased him. His wife had become no more than a friend to whom he could occasionally confide his love affairs. Monsieur Charles remained for ever a thorn in his side. Never again was Napoleon to experience such pangs of jealousy as he had experienced in regard to this young popinjay. Even after many years had passed away, Bonaparte could not meet his sometime rival without the greatest discomfort. Once, accompanied by Duroc, the Emperor went to see how the building of the Pont d'Austerlitz was progressing. They had to draw aside to allow a carriage to pass. Suddenly Napoleon pressed his companion's arm so tightly as to cause Duroc to wince. The Emperor's face became as white as marble, and his eyes blazed with wrath. In the carriage that had driven past there had sat—Hippolyte Charles!

From the hour of reconciliation, after the days when Josephine's fate had hung on a thread, Madame Bonaparte was ever on her guard. The abyss, on whose margin she had stood, was so deep, so terrifying, that she never again ventured to place herself in so perilous a position. She turned over a new leaf. Henceforth it was she, and not Napoleon, who gave way to passionate despair and jealousy. We hear no more of Josephine's being unfaithful. Granted, she was approaching the for-

ties. But her age had nothing to do with her increase of constancy. Napoleon had at last entered into her affections. What would she not have given for one spark of that passion which in former years she had despised! Too late. Josephine had become no more than the companion of his life, a friend to whom he could pour out his heart, the woman who understood him better than anyone else, the wife from whom he hoped to have issue. She was no longer his beloved. He no longer felt it incumbent upon him to be faithful to her.

The events of the eighteenth Brumaire made Napoleon Bonaparte the first and the most powerful man in France. Josephine shared the consular honours; she was wellnigh a sovereign ruler. In Martinique, a negress had once foretold that Josephine would be Queen of France! Were not the seeds of monarchical greatness perhaps already germinating in the court of the First Consul? Josephine, amid every conceivable luxury, was installed at the Luxembourg. Within the walls of this same palace, when Barras was the leading figure among the directors, she had celebrated her first triumphs. Now she was the object of deference and admiration; her amiability and her prepossessing appearance won for her the love of the whole French nation. Later, Napoleon transferred his residence to the Tuileries, and Josephine slept in the bed which before her had never been occupied save by princesses of royal birth.

Little by little her life assumed the ceremonial regularity of court procedure. There were receptions, banquets, theatres, concerts, audiences, and presentations, just as at an ordinary princely court. Napoleon and Josephine seldom had an opportunity for seeing one another in privacy, for the First Consul was absorbed in affairs of State, and Josephine was equally engrossed by the claims of public festivities. Their life together assumed a more ordinary aspect when they went on a visit to Malmaison. They could belong to one another there. In spite of unpleasant recollections concerning Monsieur Charles's stay within its walls, Napoleon looked upon Malmaison as his favourite resting-place. Indeed, he continued to use it

until the time came when the Legislative Assembly placed the palace in Saint-Cloud at his disposal.

While at Malmaison, Bonaparte devoted every free minute to Josephine. Unfortunately these free minutes were mostly limited to meal-times; and it is well known that the busy man did not spend long over his repasts. Sometimes, however, he would take part in the games organized by the young people. He would run races with Eugene, Hortense, Bourrienne, Rapp, Isabey, and so forth. Napoleon was not a good runner, and would often fall full length on the ground, where he would lie shrieking with laughter. Taking it all in all, the First Consul spent many happy days with his family at Malmaison.

Josephine's serenest hours were those she spent sitting by Napoleon's bed, reading aloud. He never wearied of her melodious voice. Even when they no longer shared the same bedchamber, Josephine would read him to sleep on the nights when business was less pressing than usual, and he could retire early to rest. Until the year 1802, like all honest cits, he shared his bed with his wife. But when Saint-Cloud became his home, when Mademoiselle George and other ladies were admitted to his private apartments, he accustomed Josephine to the fact that he needed a bedroom of his own.

Malmaison was Josephine's true home. Neither the Tuileries, nor Saint-Cloud, nor Fontainebleau, ever reflected her personality as did this mansion. The arrangements, the furnishings, all expressed Josephine's individuality. From her native isle in the tropics, she had brought with her to Europe a fondness for exotic plants, flowers, and birds. The house was full of the most exquisite examples of such flora and fauna. The park at Malmaison was laid out with artificial lakes; there were glass-houses, aquariums, and aviaries. The house was filled with valuable pictures and objets d'art. Her inborn extravagance found gratification in all these expenditures. Unheard of sums would be paid for rare plants. One tulip bulb had cost her, for instance, four thousand francs.

Josephine showed the same costly taste in the plenish-

ing of her wardrobe. It is said that in one year she bought as many as six hundred dresses. The celebrated Leroy created masterpieces of elegance and good taste for her to wear. His monthly bills never amounted to less than fifteen thousand francs. When she became empress her dress allowance was six hundred thousand francs, and this sum never sufficed. Above all else, however, she loved diamonds and jewels. Napoleon, who liked the ladies of his court to be decked in diamonds and gold, showered the most costly gifts of jewellery upon Josephine. As empress, she found the cabinet which had been used in former days by Marie Antoinette for the custody of her trinkets, far too small for the housing of her treasures. The erstwhile queen of France had never utilized the whole of its accommodation.

Josephine was continually running short of money. Napoleon had constantly to be paying her debts. He never failed her, though occasionally he complained of the enormous expenditure. His wife cost him far more than his mistresses. Still, he never seriously reproached her. He detested any kind of domestic bickering. One day he said to Roederer: "If I could not find peace and content in my home, I should indeed be an unhappy man." All those who knew the pair, Thibaudeau, Roederer, Constant, Mademoiselle Avrillon, Caulaincourt, Bourrienne, and many others, bore witness to the fact that, excepting for the storms of the early years, Josephine's and Napoleon's marriage was a happy one. Bonaparte proved to be a peace-making and solicitous spouse. No matter where he might be, though bullets were whistling round his head, and though he were overwhelmed by the labours of the campaign, his thoughts always flew home to his wife. His first act on entering a town was invariably to sit down and write a letter to Josephine. There might be a time for a few lines only, but he would tell her about his health, would ask after hers, and would inform her of his success and the details of the fight, let her know of any political event, in a word confide to her all his joys and all his cares. If no letter came from her he would become anxious lest she should be ill; or he would be filled with

gloom, fancying that she had grudged the time needed to write to him.

The letters from the First Consul and those from the Emperor Napoleon no longer breathe the passion of those which General Bonaparte had indited; but they are full of that tender care and solicitude which are shown only by those who are truly affectionate. They express the placid fondness of a husband who is happy when he knows that the woman he cherishes is happy. Napoleon's wife was his closest friend. Should she be ill, he spent every leisure moment at her bedside. In the intervals between such visits he would send a servant to enquire how she was. At night, too, he would himself go to see how she fared.

Thus the years went by. Josephine grew older, and had not as yet given him the heir his heart craved for. In 1802 he was made Consul for life, and was given the power of nominating his succeessor. Poor Josephine's soul was tortured with dread and jealousy lest a younger and more fruitful woman should replace her at Napoleon's side. She loved her husband; through him, through his fabulous good luck and genius, she had risen to a position which made her the most enviable of women. Bonaparte's manifold love affairs were known to her, and had contributed to her anxiety. She kept an ever watchful eye on all his incomings and outgoings, and did not spare him the sight of her tears, her jealousies, and her swoons. When, however, Napoleon adopted Eugene, her fears were assuaged, although she was aware that in the long run such an adoption was no guarantee of her own security. Napoleon, since he had lost all hope of having an heir from his wife, had cast his expectations on Joseph and Lucien, his brothers. As yet, however, they had nothing but daughters to their credit. If the heir was to be a nephew, why should the boy not be the offspring of one of Josephine's stock? Josephine saw salvation in her daughter Hortense. The girl was married off to Louis Bonaparte, to the great unhappiness of this future queen, who was much to be commiserated for her sad lot.

Hortense fulfilled her conjugal duty, and, in the first year of her marriage, gave birth to a son. The child was christened Napoleon Charles. This boy was Napoleon's darling, in whom he placed all his hopes. He played with the child like a father, taught him fables, allowed him to breakfast at the same table; the uncle looked upon his little nephew as his heir. The miniature Napoleon called the big Napoleon "oncle Bibiche," and loved him above everything else. But the boy was not to prove Josephine's salvation, though for a time his existence kept the spectre of divorce away.

IV

Napoleon had reached the summit of his power. The Empire had been founded. Brilliance, fame, power, and honour radiated from the young throne which was built upon the ruins of the revolution and seemed greater and more imposing than ever before. The venerable Pope Pius VII came all the way from Rome in order to be present at the crowning of this remarkable man who ten years previously had fought a lone hand for his very life in this same city. It must have been the most glorious day in Napoleon's life when, clad in the purple of ancient kings of France, with Josephine at his side, he strode up to the high altar in Notre Dame in order to receive from the hands of the head of the Church the imperial crown that had once adorned the brows of Charlemagne. He did not wait for the Pope to crown him, but took the diadem from the pontiff's hands and himself pressed it firmly on to his own head. Then he turned to his consort and crowned her likewise, the woman who had climbed the ladder of fame rung by rung in company with this hero of the sword. With dignified composure, Josephine took her place on the throne, and for five years played her part with the ease and grace of a born ruler. The monarchs of Europe laid their homage at her feet, and besought her intervention on their behalf with the man who destroyed thrones and set them up again.

Two days before this triumphant ceremony, another

had taken place. The Pope had hesitated to crown Josephine because her marriage with Napoleon had not been blessed by the Church. On November 30, 1804, in the Tuileries chapel, the matter was set right by an uncle of Napoleon's, Cardinal Fesch. No one was present as witness, neither Talleyrand, nor the faithful Berthier, nor Portalis, nor Duroc, though some historians hold contrary views. Metternich goes so far as to maintain that Napoleon and Josephine never received the ecclesiastical sanction for their union, but that, in order to put the Pope's mind at rest, they pretended that all had been set right. The Holy Father did not find out until some days later that he had been duped. Metternich continues: "At first he determined to give public expression to his anger, but he was restrained from doing so by the consideration that he would become the object of universal censure were he to inform the public that he had crowned the Empress without first having found out the precise bonds that linked her to Napoleon—thus having, as it were, given his approval to concubinage." Henri Welschinger, Frédéric Masson, Monseigneur Richard, Paul Didon, and others, on the contrary, affirm that the religious marriage of the twain took place at the date already mentioned. Cardinal Fesch would certainly not have lent himself to any such mystification as Metternich speaks of, for he was devoted to the Pope's service, and was always able to count on the pontiff's good will. Furthermore, on January 6, 1810, he declared before the Parisian diocesan council that the marriage had taken place on November 30, 1804, at four o'clock in the afternoon, with no witnesses present.

Josephine was now an empress. Far from hindering Napoleon in his ascent, she had added to his greatness and his glory by the gentleness, goodness, and grace of her personality, which won all hearts to the heroic conqueror. The religious marriage, and, above all, the coronation, had given her fresh confidence. Would Napoleon have had her crowned if he meant to divorce her, to sacrifice her for the welfare of the State; if he were contemplating a new marriage which would provide him with

an heir? Would he have acquiesced in a religious marriage if he had seriously considered a divorce to be advisable? The Catholic Church does not countenance divorce! What she has joined let no man put asunder! Thus ran Josephine's thoughts. Such were her calculations. In reality Napoleon's action had nothing whatever to do with his political aims. He was impelled to act as he did out of gratitude. A sense of duty led him to raise the woman who had been the guiding star of his first campaign, the woman to whom he had given his youthful passion—to raise her to the heights he himself had attained. He had said to Roederer: "If I make her empress I shall only be giving her what is due. Above all, I am a just man. Supposing I had been cast into prison instead of being raised to the throne, Josephine would have shared my misfortune, just as she now shares my good luck. . . . Indeed she shall be crowned, were it to cost me two hundred thousand men!"

Napoleon was, in addition to being just, a superstitious man, and he did not venture to tempt the unseen powers by putting Josephine away just at the time when fate was showering benefits on him. He always looked upon her as his good fairy. Josephine herself tells us: "He was convinced that I brought him luck, and nothing would induce him to start on a campaign without previously kissing me. He was once informed that Mademoiselle Lenormand[7] had been to see me. Although he considered her a liar, and threatened to have her placed under lock and key if she continued to exploit my credulity, he never failed to ask me for every detail of what Lenormand's cards had revealed. He invariably laughed with satisfaction when she had prophesied fresh victories for him." Napoleon was well-nigh as superstitious as his wife. She remained the only woman he truly loved, the one to whom he always came back after other loves had temporarily stolen him from her side. His passion had turned into a tender affection which nothing ever dimin-

[7] Marie Anne Lenormand was a celebrated Parisian fortune-teller. In 1820, she published her *Mêmoires historiques et secrets de l'Impératrice Joséphine.*

HORTENSE BEAUHARNAIS
After a painting by A. L. Girodet de Roucy-Trioson

ished. Had it not been that her ungovernable jealousy provoked him, he would probably never have spoken a rough word to her. But the perpetual scenes she made, roused him at times to such fury that he forgot all regard for her feelings.

Josephine's jealousy was not unfounded. Her rivals were everywhere: at court, on the stage, among the society dames and the officialdom. Her fears went so far as to lead her to fancy that some day one of her rivals would poison her, so that Napoleon would be free to marry another. "Can you believe me," he says to his brother Lucien, "when I tell you that every time she has a fit of indigestion she weeps because she imagines some one has poisoned her in order that I may take another wife!" These words hide a certain malicious cut at Lucien and other members of the Bonaparte family, who were for ever urging him to divorce Josephine.

She who had once been so careless of another's longing heart, was now to pass through bitter nights and torturing hours of uncertainty. When Napoleon was away campaigning, when victory upon victory was added to his achievements, Josephine, at home, racked her heart with the thought that another woman might win his love. Once or twice she accompanied him part of the way, and would gladly have shared the perils of the campaign. But Napoleon always sent her back, forbidding her to brave the dangers of war.

During his long stay in Poland in the year 1807, she would have given much to be allowed to be with him. All her feminine instincts were alive to the possibilities. Polish women were proverbial for their beauty. She had been told that they were quite as attractive as the French. Maybe she had been told of one in especial, a fair young woman, Marie Walewska by name, who had made an impression on Napoleon. Josephine was pressing in her requests to be allowed to go to Warsaw. She longed to pull away the arms of the young siren. Madame de Rémusat opines that Josephine was so eager to follow her husband to Warsaw because she was in love with a young equerry in the Emperor's suite. But in no other work

of the period have I been able to find anything to corroborate the statement. Furthermore, since Madame de Rémusat mentions no name, we are justified in assuming a sceptical attitude.

Napoleon continued to find excuses for not allowing Josephine to come to Warsaw. Finally, on January 8, 1807, he wrote to her: "The season is not suitable; the weather is too bad; the roads are in a terrible condition; the distance is too great; I cannot allow you to make this journey and join me here where business still retains me. You would need at least a month to get here, and would arrive sick unto death. The probability is that the state of your health on arrival would necessitate an immediate return home. It would be madness. . . . I am far more discontented with the enforced separation than you can be, and I would fain have you here to help me pass the long winter nights. But we have to bow to circumstances."

So Josephine bowed to circumstances. She felt sure that he did not pass the long winter nights alone! The thought tormented her. Then came a blow which robbed her of all hope. Hortense's and Louis's son, little Napoleon Charles, died suddenly on May 5, 1807. Now, indeed, the dread of a divorce loomed large. It is difficult to say which of the two caused her greater distress, anxiety on account of this impending doom, or grief at the loss of her beloved grandson. Napoleon was profoundly stricken by the news of his nephew's death, for he loved the lad with a father's love, had planned a brilliant future for him, and had even thought of him as the heir to the throne—his throne. In a word, he looked upon the child as the propagator of his line. "You can readily conceive the grief that I feel," he writes to his wife from Warsaw. "I wish I could be with you, so that I could comfort you. You have had the good fortune never to lose a child by death. . . . I hope soon to hear that you are calmer, and that you are feeling better. You would not add to my grief, I feel sure."

But Napoleon had made up his mind to get a divorce. He did not wish to cause his wife undue mortification, nor was there any deliberate brutality in his dealings

with her: his decision was the outcome of the political events which had re-established personal power in France. He was determined to found a dynasty. He must have an heir who would carry on his name, his glory, and his might. The fact that he had procreated children outside of wedlock, proved to him that not he but Josephine was to blame. In 1806, Eléonore Dénuelle had borne him a son, Léon; already in those days his decision had been taken. The idea of a divorce had first entered his mind when he was in Egypt, and had learned of Josephine's infidelity. But he had forgiven her. From those days onwards his intimates were persistent in their endeavours to arrange a marriage between him and a princess of the blood royal. During Lucien's stay in Spain a marriage had almost been decided upon between Napoleon and the Infanta Isabella. He was urged from all quarters to divorce Josephine in order that he might found a dynasty. Still, he could not make up his mind to this step. In 1804, he said to Roederer: "How can I lay this woman aside in order to become even greater than I am? No, such an act is beyond my powers. I have a heart in my body; I was not the offspring of a tigress! . . . I do not want to make Josephine unhappy."

By 1807 his humane feelings had been overborne by considerations of State. A child! A child! "A son by Josephine, that's what I needed. Not only would he have brought contentment into my political life, he would have added to my domestic bliss as well," Napoleon said in later years. Woman is given to man that she may bear him children! This principle served Napoleon as guide. No sooner had he come to a definite decision, than he behaved more coldly to Josephine, and saw to it that a third party should break the news to her. He charged Fouché to tell the unhappy Empress what lay in store for her.

Two unutterably bitter years followed upon the decision. Two years of tears and opposition and supplication, alternating with periods of tenderness and sympathetic consolation, which in their turn were replaced by protestations and fierce outbreaks of temper. Both partners

suffered equally. Napoleon's arguments were: State policy, and the welfare of the nation. But when he saw Josephine weeping, he mingled his tears with hers. He needed all his resolution to maintain his decision. She was the only woman he had ever loved and whom he still loved, the woman who understood him as no one else could understand him, who had borne so sweetly and patiently with all his peculiarities of temperament, in a word, had brought him the greatest happiness. "If I ever make up my mind to divorce my wife," he once said to Talleyrand, "it will mean for me the renunciation of all the charm which she has instilled into my home life. I shall have to study the tastes and habits of another and younger woman. Josephine is so adaptable, she understands me so well. Besides, I shall feel an ingrate after all she has done for me!"

The terrible moment when his intentions were to be carried out, drew ruthlessly near. Damocles's sword hung over Josephine's sorrowful head. Napoleon held a mental review of the princesses of Europe. At the end of the Prussian campaign, the possibility of his marrying the daughter of his friend and ally the King of Saxony was mooted. But the union did not appear to Napoleon a sufficiently advantageous one. Besides, Princess Maria Augusta was no longer young. She was already thirty years of age, and might prove just as barren as Josephine. After the Tilsit days, Napoleon had thought for a while of asking for the hand of the Tsar's sister, but no serious negotiations were undertaken at that time. Not until Alexander and Napoleon met in Erfurt did they resume their talks about the matter. The Emperor of the French desired nothing better than to become the brother-in-law of the amiable Russian potentate. Grand Duchess Anna was, it is true, only fourteen years old, but Napoleon was willing to wait a couple of years before marrying her. However, the mother of the princess, a sworn enemy of the French Emperor, refused to give her sanction. Thus was Napoleon compelled to look elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the war with Austria had taken place. Napoleon had dictated his peace terms to Emperor Fran-

cis, and Vienna was of the opinion that an alliance of a daughter of the House of Habsburg with Napoleon would be extremely advantageous from a political point of view. When, therefore, Napoleon asked for the hand of Marie Louise in marriage his request was granted right willingly.

Josephine's fate was sealed. She must make room for the Austrian Emperor's daughter. At least she had the satisfaction of knowing that her sacrifice was for the welfare of France. She was convinced that Napoleon would never have parted from her, had his political plans not made it absolutely necessary. Though for years she had known that a divorce was inevitable, yet when Napoleon informed her on November 30th that it was actually to take place on December 15th, her strength failed her. The announcement was followed by an agitating scene. They had been taking coffee together in the Emperor's private drawing-room. Napoleon gave a sign to the company that he wished to be alone with the Empress. Everyone withdrew; the doors were closed. Suddenly a heartrending cry came from the room. Those waiting in the ante-room looked at one another in grave concern, but no one ventured to disturb the Emperor. Then Napoleon himself appeared upon the threshold, pale and agitated. He summoned the prefect of the palace, Count Bausset, to his aid. Josephine lay on the floor, lamenting and weeping, until at last she swooned. Bausset was ordered to carry her to her apartments, while Napoleon himself lighted the way thither, bearing a candlestick in his hand. The stairway was narrow, and Bausset could not raise the helpless woman unaided. Napoleon therefore entrusted the light to a servant, and himself lifted Josephine's feet while the prefect supported her shoulders. The Emperor was full of solicitude and care, and had the greatest difficulty in controlling his own excitement and distress. When Josephine had been laid on her bed, Napoleon immediately sent for Dr. Corvisart to minister to her needs. Queen Hortense, Cambacérès, and Fouché were likewise summoned to the invalid's bedside. Little by little Josephine recovered her composure. As a matter

of fact she had been acting a part, for her swoon was feigned. While Bausset was carrying her upstairs she had whispered to him that he was holding her too tight, and was hurting her.

When, however, on the evening of December 15, 1809, in the throne-room, before the assembled family, Josephine's sentence was pronounced, though her eyes were red with weeping and her face expressed the deepest sorrow, her demeanour on this critical occasion was exemplary, her behaviour was that of a real queen. She was composed and reasonable, in spite of the wound in her heart. Napoleon was greatly agitated. He did not wish to part from Josephine without first thanking her in public for all the happiness she had brought him during the years of their married life. His eyes dimmed with tears, he turned to the arch-chancellor Cambacérès, and said:

"God alone knows how hard a step this is for me take. But no sacrifice is too great when I am convinced it is for the welfare of France. I feel urged to say that, far from having anything to complain of, I can find nothing but praise for the affection and gentleness of my much-loved consort. For fifteen years she has made my life beautiful. The memory of these years is deeply graven on my heart. She was crowned by my own hands. I have determined that she shall preserve the rank and title of Empress; and, above all, that she shall never doubt my affection, and that she shall always look upon me as her best and truest friend."

Josephine was then to have spoken. But her voice was stifled by suffering and tears. After the initial words, she had to desist. With a tremulous hand, she offered the sheet of paper, upon which her speech of assent had been written, to the secretary of State, Regnauld de Saint-Jean d'Angély, begging him to read it for her.

"With the permission of my beloved consort, I declare that I, having no hope of bearing any more children, offspring which his policy and the welfare of France demand, am willing to give the greatest proof of my affection and to make the greatest sacrifice ever asked of a woman. I thank him for all his kindness to me. His own

hand crowned me, and while I have sat upon the throne I have always had proof of the love and affection of the French people. I believe I shall best requite these feelings by consenting to the dissolution of my marriage, which is an obstacle to the future welfare of France, for it deprives the country of the possibility of being governed at some later date by a lineal descendant of the great man whose far-sightedness was able to wipe out the sufferings of a terrible revolution and to restore altar, throne, and order. But the dissolution of my marriage can in no way change the feelings I treasure in my heart. The Emperor can always look to me as his best friend. I know that this political move has cut him to the heart; but we are both proud of the fact that, by our sacrifice, we shall be contributing to the welfare of our country."

While this statement was being read, Josephine sat sobbing. But she was determined to preserve a dignified bearing in spite of the harrowing scene. She pulled herself together. Everyone marvelled at her courage, her resignation, and her strength of character. Those present who had hitherto given her little affection, were now filled with sympathy for her. Napoleon and Josephine signed the memorandum of divorce. Their signatures were followed by those of all the princes and princesses of the imperial family. Napoleon's divorce from Josephine de Beauharnais was accomplished! Deeply moved, the participators withdrew from the room. The members of the Bonaparte family were the only people to rejoice that Napoleon was at last quit of "la vieille."

The public drama was followed by a private one in the Emperor's apartments. Napoleon had gone to bed, but the excitements of the evening kept sleep way from him. His thoughts were with the woman who was no longer his wife. In imagination he saw her in her room, saw her struggling with her tears and her sorrow. He was depressed. He never could bear to see Josephine weep. Then the door of his room opened: Josephine stood before him! Her long, beautiful hair fell over her shoulders, her face was wan with suffering, her eyes were full of tears. She threw herself on her knees by Napoleon's bed, sobbing,

and covering his hands with tears. She loved him more than life, more than the throne, more than glory and renown. Once more before they parted she wished to clasp him in her arms, to received a last kiss from his lips. They mingled in tears. But he could offer her no better consolation than an assurance of his most intimate friendship.

Next day Josephine left the Tuileries. They spent the last hours together, the Emperor kissing her repeatedly and tenderly at parting. She had fainted. While she was still unconscious, Napoleon withdrew in order to avoid prolonging this painful scene, leaving her to the care of his trusted Méneval, in whose arms she was lying. As soon as the Emperor had gone, she revived, and redoubled her lamentations. She made Méneval promise to speak of her frequently to the Emperor, and to see to it that Napoleon never forgot her. When he had pledged himself to all she asked, Josephine stepped into her carriage and drove away to Malmaison.

Napoleon sought seclusion in the Trianon, where for a fortnight he indulged his grief. This man who could be hard as iron on the battlefield, who had grown accustomed to the most heartrending sights of war, mourned alone for her who had once been everything to him. He who grudged every minute that took him away from his work, now spent three days in complete inactivity. For three days his work was wholly interrupted; he received neither his ministers nor his secretaries; he neither dictated, nor read his letters. Napoleon's grief was profound and genuine. The letters he wrote to Josephine after the divorce testify to his love in the past, they are witnesses to the fact that he would always love her and would remain a faithful friend in spite of the divorce. He was not many days in the Trianon before his yearning for her overmastered him. He felt he must pay her a visit. On his return from Malmaison, he wrote:

"I found you to-day in a worse condition of mind than you should be, my dear. You have shown courage, and must again find courage to play your part well. You must not give yourself up to so profound a melancholy. You must calm your agitation, and must take care of your

health, which is so dear to me. If you have any affection for me, if you love me, then show me how strong-minded and contented you can be. You cannot doubt the steadfastness and tenderness of my friendship, and you would greatly misjudge the feelings I have for you were you to believe that I could be happy while you were unhappy, or contented were you to continue in so agitated a frame of mind. . . . Farewell, my dear; sleep well, and remember that I wish it thus . . ."

During those first weeks after their separation, Napoleon sent daily to enquire as to her health and welfare. Her grief caused him unending sorrow: "I have received your letters, chère amie. Savary tells me you are continually weeping. That is wrong of you. . . . When you can assure me that you are reasonable and that your courage has got the upper hand, I shall pay you a visit. . . . Adieu, mon amie! I, too, am sorrowful. I must know that you are content, and hear that you have regained confidence. . . ."

When he got back to the Tuileries, he became poignantly aware of the gap her absence created. "I was much saddened when I first returned to the Tuileries. The great palace seemed so empty, and I was so lonely." He felt as one forsaken; he missed Josephine's company. One day, accompanied by Hortense and Eugene, she paid him a visit. On the morrow, Napoleon wrote: "I was so rejoiced to have you near me again. I am as one bewitched when in your company." In the same letter he promises to balance her accounts. He cares for her wants now as he has always done. Her expenditure, her domestic needs, her debts, all shall be seen to, if her allowance of three million francs does not suffice.[8] "I am allowing you an extra one hundred thousand francs for the year 1810, as a special endowment for Malmaison. This will help you towards having the new plantations you want. I have ordered Estéve[9] to pay over two hundred thousand francs

[8] As ex-Empress Josephine received frs. 2,000,000 from the State treasury, and frs. 1,000,000 from the Emperor's privy purse. In addition to Malmaison, she was presented with the Elysée Palace, together with all it contained, and, later, was given the estate of Navarre, at Evreux.

[9] Josephine's steward.

so soon as the contract for the Julien house has been signed. I have also ordered that the set of rubies shall be paid for. . . I will have it valued, for I do not wish to be cheated by the jeweller. This will cost me quite four hundred thousand francs.

"I have likewise ordered that the one million francs still due to you from the civil list shall be placed at your disposal . . .in order to pay your debts. . . . In the wardrobe at Malmaison you should find five to six hundred thousand francs. You can take this money in order to increase your silver plate and replenish your underwear.

"I have ordered a beautiful china service for you, but I have told the makers to await your commands, for I wish it to be really lovely."

Thus did Napoleon care for her every need. But Aladdin's wonder-working lamp would not have sufficed to bring her all the treasures her spendthrift nature coveted!

The preparations for his second wedding took Napoleon's thoughts away from Josephine, but she was never long out of his mind, even after he had married Marie Louise. When he returned from Elba, he said to his secretary Fleury de Chaboulon: "Josephine was an excellent wife and was full of understanding. I was extremely cut up at losing her. The day that brought me news of her death was the unhappiest in my whole life."

Josephine would never have forsaken him as Marie Louise did in his adversity. She would certainly have done everything in her power to have joined him in his solitude, to have brought consolation to his heart, to have made his remaining days beautiful for him. Had she lived, and had the English government proved accommodating, Josephine might have followed him to St. Helena in order to share his downfall and disgrace, as she had once shared his glory and renown. Political considerations would no longer have arisen to keep them asunder. They would both have become private individuals, and would no longer have been a prey to interests of State. Had not Josephine, in 1814, her heart racked with despair, exclaimed: "Oh, why did I ever consent to the divorce?

Why? Napoleon is unhappy, and I cannot go to him! He is unjustly accused. Who is a better judge than I?"

Death took Josephine soon after Napoleon had been exiled to Elba. She breathed her last on May 29th, 1814. While strolling in the park at Malmaison with Tsar Alexander, she had caught a chill. This, coupled with the anxiety over Napoleon's fate, hastened her end. Her last words were: "Elba! Napoleon! Marie Louise!"

To the day of her death, Josephine remained the amiable, kindly, gentle, weak, and extravagant woman she had always been. She left debts behind her amounting to three million francs, instead of bequeathing a goodly legacy to her heirs as she might well have done, seeing the size of her income. But, in the eyes of posterity, Josephine has always remained Napoleon's spouse. Instead of harming her, the divorce from the man of might only increased the affection of all who read her story, so that, to the imperial crown that she wore with so much dignity, the nations have added the martyr's crown of thorns.

MISTRESSES

CHAPTER SIX

PAULINE FOURES, THE QUEEN OF THE EAST

Bearing the image of Josephine in his heart, Napoleon had hastened to Italy, to win there imperishable fame. For her, he won battles; for her, he stormed on from victory to victory; for her, he filled his soldiers with enthusiasm; everything for her alone, the adored one, the unique. No other woman could expel her from his mind. "I kiss your lips; I kiss your heart," he had written to her when leaving; adding that without her, the world was nothing to him. Vainly did the lovely women of Italy lavish their most ardent glances upon the young conqueror, pay the most flattering homage to the man whose fame already filled the world. Chateaubriand, in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* tells us that a young Milanese woman, "beautiful as the day," a girl of sixteen, passionately offered him her youth and her beauty. General Bonaparte scorned her advances, and with small ceremony sent her about her business in the middle of the night. She was not Josephine, the incomparable, who had enthralled his senses with her sweet voice, her svelte Creole body, and her half-veiled, dreamy eyes! Josephine, of whom he thought by day and by night, for whom he yearned, but who would not join him in Italy however much he besought her. Cruel one!

That had been the attitude of the victor of Arcola. But the commander-in-chief of the Army of Egypt thought and acted in a different way when he was away in the land of the Pharaohs. He knew now that fidelity was but an empty name, for Josephine had taught him. He still loved her, but the flames of love no longer burned fiercely in his heart. Napoleon took compensation for all the sorrow she had caused him. In his eyes, infidelity now seemed nothing more than a man's natural weakness. He was twenty-nine years old, the commander of a valiant army. His men idolized him, and would forgive him anything. He need only hold out his hand for whatever he wanted.

A charming woman, the first to take Josephine's place, was able from time to time to kiss away from his brow the great thoughts to which his genius gave birth, and to free him from the pangs of jealousy. Pauline, not long before, had become the wife of Lieutenant Fourès. Not yet twenty years of age, she had been born in Carcassonne (also the birthplace of Peyrusse, who in later years, as crown treasurer, was to become one of the most devoted of the Emperor's servants). She was the illegitimate daughter of a cook named Bellisle. Her father was unknown. Marguerite Pauline had to begin earning her livelihood in early girlhood, and became a milliner's apprentice in Carcassonne. Her cheerful disposition helped her through all the troubles of life; and, despite her poverty she was the happiest creature in the world. Like Mimi Pinson, she sang from morning till night, taking no thought for the morrow. She was popular both among women and men, and was generally spoken of as Bellilote, a diminutive of her maiden name. In her mistress's house, she became acquainted with the latter's nephew, Lieutenant Fourès, of the twenty-second chausseurs, who married her. When, shortly afterwards, his regiment was ordered to Egypt, they could not make up their minds to part, although the commander-in-chief had issued strict orders that the women were to be left at home. Bellilote disguised herself in a chasseur uniform, and was delighted in this way to accompany her husband to Alexandria.

Pauline Fourès, was golden-haired and blue-eyed like the women of the North. General Paulin says that her splendid hair enveloped her like a golden mantle, or would have done so if she had worn it down. No doubt he knew, for at a later date he became her lover. Her dark blue eyes had a satiny sheen. They were shadowed by long dark lashes. Her eyebrows, finely pencilled and likewise dark, formed a strange contrast with her golden hair.

In the headquarters at Cairo, the pretty wife of the lieutenant played a great part. There were not many French women there; only a few that, against orders

and in male attire, had followed their husbands to the front. Bellilote was the prettiest and merriest of them all. She was everywhere to be seen; at every dinner, every dance, every concert, given by the officers. Thus it came to pass, one day, that she attracted the commander-in-chief's attention. Arab women were not to his taste; their obesity (greatly esteemed by the Orientals) and their peculiar smell were repulsive to him. Junot, Bonaparte's adjutant, in after days Duke of Abrantes, seems to have been less fastidious. He entered into a liaison with one of these dark-skinned beauties, calling her Xrax-arane, and the child she bore him Othello.

Notwithstanding the scarcity of European women, there were no lack of distractions for the Egyptian army. In Cairo, as in Paris, there was a "Tivoli égyptien," a sort of amusement park, where the rankers and the officers could enjoy themselves, each after his own kind. Perhaps the place was less elegant, and offered less variety, than the Parisian institution; but soldiers in the field are not usually fastidious.

It was at the Tivoli that General Bonaparte first met Madame Fourès. She was accompanied by her husband and some other officers. Her hair shone like pure gold, and her brilliantly red lips had a most seductive smile. Napoleon's feelings did not hang long in the balance; desire soon had its way with him. His wishes were equivalent to a ruler's commands. We have already a foretaste of the dictator who in later days was to send his valet for any woman upon whom his fancy had fallen.

Next day, Bellilote received an invitation to dine at the table of General Dupuy, military commandant of Cairo. The strange thing about the matter was that Fourès was not invited. Had he done anything to annoy the commander? The lieutenant was not aware of any transgression. Still, not being asked, he could not accompany his wife, and she went alone. She was the leading figure among the guests, and all eyes were centred upon her. She was wearing a white India-muslin dress, and looked charming. Colonel Junot had taken her into dinner. The time had just come to serve coffee, when

steps were heard in the vestibule. Spurs clicked, swords rattled, the doors were flung widely open, and the commander-in-chief entered as if he had come by chance, accompanied by a few staff officers. Dupuy assumed an air of joyful surprise, and his guests played up to him. Politely accepting the offer of dessert and a cup of coffee, Bonaparte sat down and slowly ate an orange. Silently he continued to fix his eyes on pretty Bellilote, who ultimately lowered hers in confusion. When he had finished his coffee, he rose to his feet, threw a last lingering glance at Madame Fourès, and took leave of the company.

Madame Fourès had not fully recovered from her confusion when Junot gallantly offered her a cup of coffee. His hand was extraordinarily shaky, and, as if by misadventure, he spilled some of the brown liquid upon Bellilote's white dress. The lady was much distressed, and the surrounding officers were eager to help! Junot advised her to retire to a room in the first story. There she would find a pitcher of water, so that she could wash out the coffee without delay, and wait while her dress got dry. As he spoke, several of the officers smiled ironically, but Bellilote did not notice this.

Light of foot, and no longer embarrassed, she tripped upstairs to the room. What a surprise awaited her! She did not find a pitcher of water, but—General Bonaparte! From that hour, Pauline Fourès was the commander-in-chief's mistress, the liaison continuing throughout the Egyptian campaign. Bonaparte was pleased with the golden-haired Bellilote. Her charm, her liveliness, her vivacious southern temperament, were very much to his taste.

Beyond question, however, among the persons of the drama, there was one too many—the husband. It was not difficult to find means of getting rid of this superfluous character. Napoleon sent him to France with despatches, tacitly hoping that the English would take him prisoner and that he would never return to Egypt. Berthier, chief of the general staff, was instructed to send him on this mission. He summoned the lieutenant and said: "My

dear Fourès you are the luckiest man of us all. You will see France once more. The commander-in-chief has full confidence in you, and wishes to entrust to you secret despatches for the Directory.'' Fourès was delighted at being singled out for this important service. In Paris, he was to visit Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte, and was then to come back to Damietta. He naturally believed that he was not to be separated from his young wife. But he soon had to accept another way of looking at matters. He was told that it would be extremely dangerous to take a woman across the seas in a small despatch boat, seeing that the Mediterranean was now full of English warships. On December 28, 1798, therefore, Lieutenant Fourès set forth alone in the shebeck ''Le Chasseur.''

Now, Bellilote became sultana. General Bonaparte furnished for her, in the Oriental style, a delightful house, hard by Elfi Bey's palace, where he had taken up his own quarters. Here she could do the honours when the general, his secretary Bourrienne, and other officers, came to dine with her. Bonaparte came very often. After dinner, they would drive out through the moonlight, in the cool of the Egyptian evening. Eugene Beauharnais, Josephine's son, and another young adjutant, Merlin by name, had to ride behind the carriage. Bellilote assumed the airs of a princess, and was very little less. At any rate she was the acknowledged mistress of General Bonaparte, of ''Sultan Kebir,'' as the natives called him. The relationship was an accepted fact, at which no one took umbrage. All rankers knew her, and had nicknamed her Cleopatra; but the officers spoke of her as Notre Dame de l'Orient.

This care-free idyll was suddenly interrupted when Bellilote's husband, who had been so adroitly got out of the way, reappeared upon the scene like a bolt from the blue. As Bonaparte and his officers, and perhaps Pauline as well, had hoped, Fourès had actually fallen into the hands of the English. On December 29th, the day after leaving port, ''Le Chasseur'' had been captured by an English ship, the ''Lion.'' Whether it was because the

English were cognizant of the intrigue, or simply because they had no use for their prisoner, cannot be ascertained. In any case, after taking away his despatches, they set him ashore on the Egyptian coast and left him to his own devices. He had had to give his parole never to fight against the English again. From an English authority we learn that his despatches were worthless, for their contents had previously been communicated to the Directory. In actual fact, they had been already published in an official Parisian journal; the despatches, therefore, were a mere pretext. Naturally, Lieutenant Fourès made his quickest way back to the headquarters of the Egyptian army, and to his wife. He had been unaware of her infidelity, and only learned of it after he had landed.

The meeting was not a happy one. Fourès now understood why he had been singled out for distinction. There was a violent scene between the pair, in which the lieutenant is said to have used his powerful cavalryman's fist. But Bellilote remained victress and queen in the home provided for her by her lover, and ere long the pair were divorced by the authority of Paymaster Sartelon, Fourès having agreed to this step. But when, at a later date, he wanted to remarry in France, he encountered difficulties, being told that the drumhead divorce in Egypt had been invalid. His wife, on the other hand, had no difficulty whatever when she took a second husband.

Bonaparte's fondness for Bellilote was not so fleeting as might have been expected. For her sake he even forgot his beloved Josephine, and actually thought of getting a divorce from his wife—all the more since he had heard of her renewed infidelity. Besides, he had by this time become assured that Josephine would never bear him any children. Pauline, on the other hand, was quite young, and her physical powers were unexhausted. He hoped she would bear him a child, a boy, who would be the heir of his name and fame. But Pauline, like Josephine, was to disappoint him in this respect.

"The silly little fool," he said one day to Bourrienne, "does not know how to make a child"; but when the

words of Bonaparte were carried to Bellilote's ears, she exclaimed: "Goodness me, it's not my fault!"

The romance, which had its piquant side, lasted eight months. During General Bonaparte's campaign in the Syrian desert, Bellilote stayed behind in Cairo. He wrote her the most loving letters, but unfortunately she destroyed them, burning these witnesses of an affection in which Napoleon's leading thought was to have a child.

Then came the day when events summoned Napoleon back to Europe, and away from Bellilote's side. He made it clear to her that he could not take her with him, and she tearfully accepted the inevitable. The command of the Egyptian army devolved on General Kléber, and it is currently reported that he took over the favourite sultana as well. There is no certain evidence as to this, but we know that Bonaparte had told him to send Pauline back to France when the sea passage became safer, and that for a time Kléber refused to grant her a passport. Napoleon had left her one thousand louis-d'or for the journey.

As in Josephine's case, so now in Bellilote's, Junot was the first (when he returned to France) to arouse doubts in Bonaparte's mind as to his lady love's fidelity. The thought that Kléber had succeeded him, not merely in the command of the army of Egypt, but also in the affections of his mistress, aroused in Napoleon an excess of jealousy such as he felt only on one other occasion in his life—in Italy, when he learned that Josephine had deceived him.

At length, however, Madame Fourès, who had again become Pauline Bellisle, reached French soil once more, after she and some of the learned men who accompanied the Egyptian expedition had been taken prisoner by the English, who captured their ship "l'Amerique." Kléber, when sending her her passport, wrote her a long letter, which certainly implies that Pauline had been something more to him than his commanding officer's mistress:

"My dear friend, you have nothing more to do here. Go back to France. There you have a friend who will not fail to interest himself in your future. May you be happy, and when things go well with you think of the man whom

you leave behind. He has been rather rough[1] sometimes, but posterity will always say of him that he was a good fellow."

The lapse of time between Bonaparte's sailing from Egypt and Bellilote's departure was only about six weeks, and not nine months as many biographers declare. Pauline had left Egypt when Kléber was assassinated by Suleiman el Halebis.[2] When she reached Paris, great events were imminent. The eighteenth Brumaire was at hand, and General Bonaparte was to become the leading man in France. He had no time to dally with love. Moreover, Josephine had regained power over him, now that he had forgiven her for the second time. Nevertheless, Bellilote found awaiting her a luxuriously furnished house at Belleville near Paris; and more money than she had ever dreamed of possessing. She was provided for for the rest of her life. Her sometime lover also sought out a mate for her. Henri de Ranchoup, an ex-infantry officer with a stormy past, became her husband in the year 1800. Napoleon provided in all possible ways for Bellilote's future. In the year 1801, he made Ranchoup sub-commissary for commercial affairs in Santander and subsequently consul. In 1810, Ranchoup became consul at Gothenburg in Sweden. Henri and Pauline were amply provided with funds. As late as 1811, Bellilote received sixty thousand francs from the theatrical fund. Although Napoleon usually kept such matters to himself, this lavishness could not be

[1] In an article in the "Grande Revue" of November 1, 1899, E. Guillon says that on one occasion Kléber dealt so roughly with Pauline Bellisle that he actually threw her out of his window into the garden. But there is no confirmation of this statement.

[2] Selim III had issued a manifesto to his subjects, denouncing the great commander as an unbeliever, and as an enemy to the Mohammedan faith. The Sultan promised all the treasures of the earth, and his protection, to anyone who would slay the commander-in-chief of the French in Egypt. On June 14, 1800, Kléber, who had been to Gizeh for a short time, returned to Cairo. When, accompanied by Protain the architect, he reached headquarters, a man in rags approached him. The newcomer fell on his knees before the general as if to ask a favour. Compassionately Kléber tried to raise the suppliant to his feet, but was stabbed in doing so. "I have been murdered," he exclaimed, staggering, and then falling. Protain hastened to help Kléber, but Suleiman stabbed the architect six times. Then, turning back to his first victim, he thrust the dagger thrice more into the general's breast, but the first stab had been fatal. The murderer's fate was a terrible one. His right hand was hewn off, and he was subsequently impaled. He bore this horrible torture without a cry, and died exclaiming: "La ilaha illa-llahu" ("There is no god but Allah").

concealed. Even before the eighteenth Brumaire, the *Quinzaine du Grand Alcandre,* one of the most outspoken pamphlets of those days, contained a strongly worded assertion that the victor of Lodi was ruining France by his mistresses. The phrase was an exaggeration. The successor of Alexander the Great never had more than one mistress at a time.

But when Napoleon became Consul, the lovely days of Egypt were already, for Bellilote, things of the past. Despite all her requests, he refused to see her again. Then she had recourse to the same measures as Notre Dame de Thermidor. She attended every ball and every operatic or theatrical performance where she knew he would be present, in the hope of getting a glance from him. Once only, when he had already become Emperor, was she able to exchange a word with him, at a masked ball in the house of Champagny, Minister for Foreign Affairs. She recognized Napoleon beneath his domino, and was overjoyed. General Paulin, in his memoirs, says: "No words can describe Madame de Ranchoup's ecstasy of delight on the day of this encounter."

Nevertheless, she quickly consoled herself for the loss of her lover. As Countess de Ranchoup, she entertained lavishly. Young, pretty, spirited, extravagant, a seeker after pleasure, and ignorant of the value of money, she indulged her every caprice. The Russian men about town, Count Narishkin, Count Chernysheff, and the wealthy Demidoff, were frequent visitors. Paulin (in later days a general), Adjutant Bertrand, and Peyrusse (the treasurer's brother), were simultaneously on the most intimate terms with Bellilote. As their successors, came Baron Reveroni Saint-Cyr the Italian, Lepidi the Corsican (adjutant of the Duke of Padua), and Bellard an officer of the guard. She was a great patron of the arts, bought valuable paintings, and was herself a skilful painter. She sang, played the lute and the harp, and, in a word, was a woman of many talents. She also wrote novels. One of these, entitled *Lord Wenworth,* was published by Delaunay in 1813; another, *Une Châtelaine du douzième siècle,* was published twenty years later by Aillaud.

Her marriage to Ranchoup was no happier than her

marriage to Fourès had been. Soon after her second wedding, Bellilote went her own way. Then she fell on evil days, had to sell her fine mansion and seek a more modest dwelling. The man who had once provided for her so liberally had himself lost his great place in the world, and was an exile on a distant and lonely island. Pauline Fourès had no special gratitude towards her first lover. Napoleon was nothing more to her than any other man had been.

The Duchess of Abrantes has written a sentimental sequel to this story, declaring that Bellilote never forgot the Emperor, and telling us that when he was in St. Helena she did her best to break the fetters of the chained lion. But Frédéric Masson, the greatest authority concerning the Emperor's private life, pours cold water upon these imaginings. He writes (using the historic present—for Masson was born in 1847): "In Paris the report is rife that Pauline is trying to deliver Napoleon from St. Helena. She entertains no thoughts of the kind, for she now detests the Emperor and flies royalist colours." When the Duchess of Abrantes reiterated this story in her memoirs, Madame de Ranchoup emphatically contradicted the report. She had no wish to get into trouble with the police, who kept a close watch on her as a former friend of Bonaparte.

What had given rise to the rumour was a journey to Brazil which Madame de Ranchoup had made in 1816, accompanied by her lover Jean Auguste Bellard. But the aim of the journey was a purely business one. Her means of support were nearly exhausted, and she was on the look-out for fresh resources in Brazil. She sold there goods bought in Paris, or exchanged them for articles made of ebony or mahogany which she could turn back into money when she got back to France.

Madame de Ranchoup outlived the Emperor by nearly fifty years. Old, withered, and in her second childhood, she died among the pets—monkeys, gaily coloured birds—which she had brought back from South America. This was on March 18, 1869, a year before the collapse of the Second Empire.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MILANESE SINGER, GIUSEPPINA GRASSINA

The victor of Lodi had entered Milan. Like a Roman general celebrating a triumph, he had received the homage of the Lombards, who regarded him as their liberator from the Austrian yoke. His whole family had come to share in his glory and to sun themselves in his rays. Letizia had hastened over from Marseilles with her youngest children, Pauline, Caroline, and Jerome, to admire "il grande generale," and to ask his permission for Pauline's marriage to General Leclerc. Elsie, the eldest of the daughters, had come earlier, with her husband Baciocchi. Finally, too, even the unfaithful Josephine had made up her mind to quit the turmoil and the amusements of Paris. A staff of valiant officers surrounded the young general. Berthier(who, with his five and forty years, seemed almost an old man beside Napoleon), Junot, Augereau, Masséna, Marmont, Duroc, Louis Bonaparte, Sulkowski, Lemarrois, Lavalette, etc. —all of them regarded him both with wonder and veneration. The Milanese flocked to see the young man who in a campaign of two months had won for himself a reputation equal to that of the greatest commanders in history.

His small stature, his extreme thinness, and the sickly pallor of his countenance, conflicted with the wonderful deeds he had performed. No one would believe that this weakly-looking man could endure endless hardships and deprivations. Nevertheless, his body seemed to be made of steel. His energy, his strict self-supervision, the simplicity of his manners and customs amid all the license he tolerated in his army, aroused the greatest admiration. The most beautiful women of Italy longed for a glance from the solemn grey eyes of the conqueror, but in vain. "His character," we read in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* "was too strong for it to be possible for him to walk into a trap: he sensed the abyss beneath the flowers.

His position was extremely critical; he commanded elderly generals, and his task was a difficult one. Envious eyes watched all his movements. He was cautious. His fortune depended upon his prudence. He could not risk an hour's heedlessness. How many of his victories turned upon less than an hour!"

In the castle of Montebello, not far from Milan, the young conqueror held a quasi-royal court in the year V (spring of 1797). Three hundred Polish legionaries formed his body-guard. Here he received the foreign negotiators, concluded treaties, amazed the world. Hither he summoned the most noted artists and men of science, thus making himself no less popular than he was famous. All the notables of Italy, all who were stirred by ambition, all who loved wire-pulling, and all the enthusiasts, hastened to pay homage to the great man. Bonaparte was cheerful and amiable, presenting his best side to his young court. "In those happy days," reports Marmont, "he radiated a charm which no one could resist. . . . He displayed a truly grateful and benevolent, I might almost say, a sensitive heart." When, weary of business, festivities, and receptions, he had withdrawn to one of the quiet islands on Lake Como or Lake Maggiore, he would give himself up to the charms of Italian music, and especially of Italian song. "The Italians," he was wont to say, " are the only people who can compose opera."

At such times, Isola Bella, the most beautiful of the Borromean Islands, was his favourite resort. Surrounded by Josephine and a few of his most trusted intimates, or by his whole staff and all the members of his family, he would sit beneath the cypresses and the pines, whose dark-green foliage contrasted with the brilliant tints of the blossoming rose bushes and laurel bushes, listening to the beautiful singing of Grassini from La Scala in Milan. She threw all her loving ardour, all her devotion, into her magnificent alto voice, which seemed to be imploring a glance from the eyes of General Bonaparte. But his glances were bestowed upon no one except his charmer Josephine.

Giuseppina Grassini, before whose beauty and art all

GIUSEPPINI GRASSINI
After a painting by Vigée-Lebrun

Italy lay prostrate, the young singer who was better able than anyone else to play the part of Giulietta,[1] who expected the utmost from herself, who better than anyone else could sing the beautiful duet with Romeo

Dunque, mio bene,
Tu mia sarai?

was, next to General Bonaparte, the most fêted person in Milan. Foreign and native princes vied with one another in wooing her favour. Prince Augustus Frederick, afterwards Duke of Sussex, esteemed himself happy to be the slave of the "primadonna assoluta," who delighted to harness him to her chariot and to master him by a glance from her beautiful eyes. There was only one man, General Bonaparte, upon whom her loveliness made no impression. He merely noted the value of her beauty for stage purposes, and merely listened to her splendid voice. But for him Giuseppina wanted to be, not the artist, but the woman. She was four-and-twenty years old,[2] tall and slender, with black hair and glowing eyes, a daughter of Lombard peasant folk, and a perfect example of Italian beauty.[3] Her thick and finely pencilled eyebrows stood out in sharp contrast to the ivory whiteness of her face. Her eyes conveyed an abundance of love and devotion, and her movements showed both charm and majesty. But General Bonaparte marked none of this. He could see only Josephine, seated beside him with her inimitable Creole grace.

Three years later, when his love for Josephine had cooled, and when, again crowned with laurels, he reentered Milan, Napoleon had eyes for the singer's beauty. But by now Giuseppina Grassini was less beautiful than of yore. She was approaching the age of thirty, momentous for women of the south. Half mournfully and half bitterly, she said to Bonaparte: "In 1797 I was at the climax of my beauty and my talent. My name was in

[1] The famous Zangarelli composed this opera in twenty-four hours expressly for Grassini and the primo soprano Crescentini.

[2] Giuseppina Grassini was born in Varese, a Milanese village, in the year 1773.

[3] Prince Belgiojoso, a general, had been her first lover, and had had her trained as a singer.

everyone's mouth. I blinded all eyes, and inflamed all hearts. Only the young general remained cold, and it was only with him that all my thoughts were occupied. How strange! When I was still worth something, when Italy was at my feet, when I would have scorned all this homage for one glance from your eyes, I could not get what I wanted. And now you summon me to you, when it is no longer worth while, when I am no longer worthy of you."

Napoleon tells us that it was not until 1805 that he first became intimately acquainted with Grassini; that the liaison began when he went to Italy to be crowned there as king. But in this case, as in that of Madame Turreau, the memory of the prisoner in St. Helena was at fault. Why should the victor of Marengo, in the spring of the year 1800, have scorned the affection of Giuseppina, who, together with the singer Marchesi, was, on the Milanese operatic stage, celebrating his victories? Josephine was no longer the sole mistress of his heart; in Egypt, Madame Fourès had given him to eat of the tree of knowledge. A conqueror's fame no longer intoxicated him as it had done in the days when he spoke as follows to the ragged soldiers of the Army of Italy: "Soldiers, you are half starved and half naked. . . . Your patience, your courage, do you honour, but give you no glory, no advantage. I will lead you into the most fertile plains of the world. There you will find flourishing cities, teeming provinces. There you will reap honour, glory, and wealth."

Everything had happened as he had predicted. Fame and booty had come to him and his soldiers. On his first visit to Milan, the young conqueror had been intoxicated with martial glory, and the adulation paid to him as a renowned warrior was the only adulation he had known.

After Marengo, it was otherwise. Conquests were no longer new to Napoleon, and he could think of other things. Nor was he now a young dreamer with a heart thirsting for love. He was a much occupied man, the chief of the State, who could not afford to give more than the fleeting moments to the distractions of love. The ladies of the stage were the most readily accessible. He

need merely beckon, and they were at his disposal. Giuseppina Grassini was only waiting for his nod to throw herself into his arms with all the passion of her southern temperament. Furthermore, she was a singer, and Napoleon, unmusical though he was, loved music more than any other art. He now listened with enthusiasm to Grassini's singing, and after the concert summoned her to his presence. She was not backward. Her most ardent wish was fulfilled; she was the beloved of Bonaparte, the greatest man of the day. At length he was willing, in his turn, to pay her the homage due to her as a woman.

Next morning Giuseppina Grassini breakfasted in Napoleon's room with the First Consul and the faithful Berthier. He had already determined to take his mistress back to Paris with him. To lull Josephine's jealousy to sleep, a pretext was found. In the fourth official bulletin, Bourrienne wrote that General Bonaparte would probably summon the celebrated singers Blangini, Marchesi, Madame Billington, and Mademoiselle Grassini, to take part in the Fourteenth of July celebrations in Paris. Appearances were kept up, and Josephine, for whom this little mystification was arranged, allowed herself to be deceived by it. Madame Billington was invited to Paris simply as a cover for Grassini. No one imagined that the woman who, in the Invalides, on the twenty-fifth Messidor of the year VIII (July 14, 1800), sang an ode upon the liberation of Italy, was the First Consul's mistress. This ode had been written at Bonaparte's orders. It was penned by Fontanes, and set to music by Méhul.

Although Bonaparte was at that date regarded with great enthusiasm by the Parisians, the beautiful singer attracted almost as much attention as the First Consul. For a time, Italian music celebrated a veritable triumph in the French capital. Nobody would listen to anything but Italian opera, and Grassini was in especial request. She sang at the evening parties in Malmaison, which were held once every ten days; and she had to adorn all the festivities given by the ministers of State and other dignitaries of the consular court. For instance, she sang

at the festival organized at the Ministry of War by General Berthier on the first anniversary of Marengo.

Giuseppina, however, had wished to play the part of the head of the State's mistress in a very different fashion; she had dreamed of exercising an influence à la Pompadour. In fancy she saw herself surrounded by a crowd of flatterers, who would try to derive advantage from her influence with the First Consul, and whose requests and petitions she would accept in order to pass them on to her high-placed lover. Instead of this, she had to enjoy her happiness all alone in a quiet house on the Rue Chantereine, whereas, a true child of her nation, she would have liked to make a parade of her place in Napoleon's favour. It is true that her lover lavished treasures upon her, giving her an income of fifteen thousand francs a month, so that in the matter of extravagant display she could compete with the official mistresses of sovereign princes; but he had expressly forbidden her to attract any public notoriety to the fact of their liaison. He knew that it behoved him to set a good example to France, which he had described as corrupt to the core. He knew that many of the rulers of this nation in earlier days had ruined the State through listening to the counsels of their mistresses; and had thereby brought themselves down to destruction. He knew, moreover, that it was dishonourable for a man to change women as he changes his clothes. Even if he were not strong enough to guide his conduct by his own principles; even if, like Louis XIV, Louis XV, Henri IX, and Francis I, he could not forbear the enjoyments of the senses; still, he did not wish to manifest his weaknesses to the public. These weaknesses would not have been pardoned in a Napoleon. "His happiness lay in his good behaviour!"

This retirement was not at all to the taste of Grassini. The First Consul's brief and secret visits to the Rue Chantereine, his love "sans soins et sans charmes" did not satisfy her ardent and proud heart. She was from a country where women love for love's sake. She had been spoiled by men. They had cast themselves at her feet, had begged and prayed, had waited until the goddess

would accord them a crumb of her favour. Napoleon's ways were different. He was unwilling to spend much time on preliminaries. Perhaps on the way to visit Giuseppina he had had his head full of titanic plans; and he wanted to get back to his study as soon as possible, that he might commit his thoughts to paper. He did not wait for people to give him something; he took what he regarded as his right, and then paid royally for what he had taken.

Guiseppina soon consoled herself. Rode,[4] the celebrated young violinist from Bordeaux, knew better than the First Consul how to tune up the strings of passion. One day she went away with him, taking with her nothing more than her memories of casual moments of the hero's love. In Rode's company she visited Germany, England Holland, and Italy, and celebrated the greatest triumphs wherever she went. Napoleon took no umbrage at her flight. When she came back to France with her lover, he welcomed her with open arms. In 1808, the Emperor appointed her prima donna at the Théâtre de l'Impératrice, with an annual income of thirty-six thousand francs over and above the abundant presents in cash he lavished on her. Nor was Rode forgotten. He gave concerts in Paris, and Napoleon paid twelve hundred francs for a box at these. Grassini sang at the imperial court, just as she had sung in earlier days at the consular court. From 1807 to 1814, her income from the imperial treasury amounted to seventy thousand francs a year. She could also give concerts, all the profit of which was her own. In the year 1809 she and her fellow artists went to Germany with the Emperor, and Grassini's fee for the journey was ten thousand francs. Even for the little trip from Paris to Fontainebleau, she was given a special allowance of one thousand three hundred and fifty-six francs, in addition to a large present. This was in the year 1810.

Both socially and artistically, Giuseppina Grassini had a very great success. Although, despite her distinguished and majestic aspect, her manners were vulgar, the draw-

[4] Born February 17, 1779; died November 25, 1830.

ing-rooms of aristocrats both at home and abroad were always open to her. The Italian accent with which she spoke both French and English did not stand in the way. She was not clever, but had a fair share of mother wit, which often caused great amusement. "Received everywhere, welcomed everywhere," wrote Madame Ancelot; "endowed with a kindly, vivacious, genuine, and original disposition; speaking a mixed jargon of French and Italian, quite peculiar to herself, but competent to express all she wanted to say, and used by her to convey the quaintest observations and admissions—Mademoiselle Grassini referred all her errors of tact to her ignorance of the language, if anyone should be annoyed or offended by what she said."

When Guiseppina Grassini was one of a distinguished company in Paris in 1838, the conversation turned on Napoleon and Louis XVIII. As a jest, it was proposed to discuss what the two rulers would say if they happened to meet one another in the Elysian fields. Each in turn gave his opinion. Suddenly Grassini said, with childlike frankness: "I am certain that Napoleon would ask Louis XVIII: 'Why did you not go on paying my dear Grassini her pension?' " The plainness of speech with which she would utter the most delicate matters was amazing. One of the best-known instances is her rather coarse but extremely witty impromptu concerning the decoration of Crescentini, the castrato, whom Napoleon had given the Iron Crown. In a Parisian drawing-room, a pompous nobody was protesting against this. What right, he enquired, had the Italian sopranist to such a distinction. Thereupon Grassini rose to her feet and interrupted the speaker with the theatrical query: "Et sa blessure, Monsieur?" A storm of laughter and applause put an end to the discussion. She would speak with perfect unconcern and lack of refinement of her liaison with Napoleon and of that with the Duke of Wellington. No scruples of conscience ever prevented her seeking her lovers among the Emperor's enemies. Lord Londonderry, his father, Sir C. Stewart, English Ambassador in Paris, Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, and Lord Castlereagh, the chief of the coalition against Napoleon, were among her intimates.

Opinions differ as to the position of Giuseppina as an artist. Some acclaim her as the best singer of her time. Others, for instance Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, did not think much of her voice. But all are agreed as to the wonderful mobility with which she could transform her alto into a clear soft soprano. De Quincy writes enthusiastically as to the effects of her singing upon him. "Her voice," he says, "was delightful to me beyond all that I had ever heard. Yes; or have since heard; or ever shall hear. . . . Thrilling was the pleasure with which almost always I heard this angelic Grassini. Shivering with expectation I sat, when the time drew near for her golden epiphany; shivering I rose from my seat, incapable of rest, when that heavenly and harplike voice sang its own victorious welcome." This much is certain, that she was richly endowed by nature. No one understood better than she how to touch people's hearts with song. What she lacked in training and technique, she made good through the warmth and passion of her interpretation.

Down to the time of Napoleon's first abdication, Giuseppina continued to delight the Parisians with her song. Then she went on her travels, and did not return to France until after the Emperor's fall, when she became the Duke of Wellington's mistress. Some of the glamour of the great Napoleon continued to cling to the singer. There was a charm about her personality which was even greater than the interest felt in her as artist and woman. Lady Burghersh, Wellington's niece heard Giuseppina Grassini sing at the English embassy in Paris, and could find no words strong enough to describe the impression aroused by the singer, as sometime favourite of the dethroned Napoleon. The Iron Duke annexed his opponent's mistress just as he annexed many of the other objects which had once belonged to the great Emperor. Cleopatra sang to him with no less passion than of old she had sung to Caesar in the Tuileries:

Adora i cenni tuoi, questo mio cor fedele.

For his part, Wellington, "ce cher Villainton," as Giuseppina called him, did not allow himself to be asked twice for a "sguardo sereno d'amore." But the Duke was

by no means so free with his money as Napoleon had been. The spoiled darling had now to put up with more modest adornments than in the days when she had still been able to dip her hands into the imperial treasury. Her bills at Leroy's, the celebrated court modiste's, show that the spendthrift Grassini, through whose hands millions had flowed in the old days, had now to be as thrifty in her purchases as the wife of a simple burgher. Leroy sent in the following modest bill, in which an arithmetican will note a number of little mistakes, which cut both ways!

	frs. cts.
1815, December.—To making and trimming a black velvet gown bordered with satin, tulle ruching to the bodice, girdle	239.00
To making a grey lilac levantine dress, trimmed with silk fringe and satin	18.00
To 7¾ ells of levantine @ frs. 9.75	75.56
To 3 ells of fringe @ frs. 30	93.75
To lilac satin puffs under the fringes and girdle, stiffening for the collar	44.00
To 6¾ ells of tulle @ frs. 6	40.50
To 1½ ells of blond-lace @ frs. 8.50	12.75
To 1¾ ells of ditto for sleeves @ frs. 5	6.89
Total	529.64

The Duke of Wellington seems to have made no bones about paying the account, which was certainly not an extravagant one. He was no squanderer, and kept his wife on much the same footing as his mistress. Here is another of Leroy's bills for Lady Wellington this time (spelt by Leroy "Wilinton"!)

	frs. cts.
1814, November.—To making a white satin cloak trimmed with ruching, lined with sarcenet	32.00
To trimming of pinked crêpe for the coat and gown, girdle and clasps	62.00
To making bodice and sleeves for slips	10.00
To satin for sleeves, bodice, and trimmings	28.00
To lining for cross-laced bodice	3.00
To making and lining a white satin wrap	20.00
To small black satin muff lined with rose-coloured sarcenet	15.00
To eiderdown quilt in black sarcenet bordered with ribbon	60.00
To black velvet hat, violet satin tulle ruching, five violet and black feathers	144.00
Total	380.00

In 1815, Giuseppina Grassini retired from the stage. She was wise enough to close her brilliant career by a self-imposed silence before her voice gave out. Thenceforward she spent her days partly in Paris and partly in Milan, preserving to the last some relics of the beauty which had fascinated the hero of Marengo. Despite her extravagant tastes, she did not become impoverished like so many of her colleagues. The artistic temperament was in her tinctured by a certain amount of parsimony which saved her from want. During the days of her greatest prosperity she had laid aside a modest fortune, and was well-to-do when she died in Milan in January 1850, leaving behind her a heritage of half a million lire. Her life had been a long dream of happiness and pleasure. The great ones of the earth had competed with their wealth for a glance from her eyes, a smile from her lips; and Giuseppina's conquests in the field of love had been almost as numerous as the military successes of the hero whose favour she had won.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GIORGINA

Two noted actresses had almost simultaneously achieved success at the Comédie Française. One of them was extraordinarily ugly, but highly gifted; the other, though still little more than a child, was amazingly beautiful, but a less talented artist. The ugly one was Cathérina Joséphine Duchesnois, the beautiful one was Marguerite Joséphine George. Both attracted the First Consul's attention. He had a great fondness for tragedy, preferring it to comedy or to opera. But on this occasion beauty gained the victory over artistry.

Mademoiselle George enjoyed the Emperor's favour longer than most people. She did not suffer the fate of poor Duchesnois; nor yet that of the hideous but distinguished opera singer Madame Branchu, whom the First Consul summoned to his presence once only, never asking for her again. His liaison with the pretty actress lasted two years, but was kept peculiarly quiet. Lucien Bonaparte,[1] in his memoirs, writes: "Mademoiselle George was generally believed to be under the First Consul's protection. Still, it cannot be said that the relationship was notorious, although most people knew of it."

The day before Napoleon first received the young actress at Saint-Cloud, he had seen her playing Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia in Aulis*. She was then fifteen years of age, and strikingly beautiful. Her arms, her neck, the lines of her body were classical. The only thing wrong was her feet,

[1] It seems most probable that Lucien Bonaparte had been Mademoiselle George's first lover. He had noted her beauty, and was by no means insensitive to it. To make sure of her favour, he invoked the aid of her patroness and teacher, Mademoiselle Raucourt, and, as a foil, invited the two ladies to supper. The younger woman visited him alone on one occasion, and when she made her début at the Comédie Française, he sent her a golden tea-service with 100 louis-d'or stowed away in the teapot. We do not know why his intimacy with the actress came to an end. Perhaps Madame Jouberthon lured him away from her; or it may be that Prince Sapieha, or Napoleon, came between the pair.

which were large and ugly. In childhood she had worn rough and ill-made shoes.

Mademoiselle George, whose real name was Marguerite Joséphine Wemmer or Weimer, had tasted the woes of poverty. She was the daughter of a petty theatrical manager, Georges Weimer by name, who went about with a travelling operatic company in the tinselled poverty of the footlights. He was theatre director, conductor of the orchestra, and stage manager, all rolled into one. When his daughter Marguerite Joséphine was born, on February 23, 1787, he was at Bayeux, a small provincial town, with his company. Her mother was likewise in the profession. As an opera singer in Weimer's company, she was one of those unknown stars who sacrifice their youth in the temples of art where neither art nor incense is to be found. At one time she had been the leading figure on Weimer's stage; but when she became prematurely old and wrinkled, he had to find someone else to play the star parts. He had his eye, for this purpose, on his daughter, Marguerite Joséphine, for already in early childhood she promised to become a beauty. He did not trouble to enquire whether she had talent. It seemed to him that a talent for acting must, in her case, be in the blood; and he made her tread the boards when she was only five years old, helping her father out by playing children's parts.

Her real debut came at Amiens, which Weimer visited when she was twelve years old. She played the part of Virginie in *Paul et Virginie,* and had a great success. The young actress did well, likewise, in *Les deux petits savoyards* and in *Le jugement de Paris.* Then she was "discovered." Towards the end of 1801, the celebrated actress Sophie Raucourt[2] was starring in Amiens as Dido. She saw Joséphine Weimer act, was struck by the inten-

[2] Françoise Marie Antoinette Sophie Raucourt was one of the most noted actresses of her day. Her father was a provincial actor. She was born at Nancy in the year 1756, and, like Mademoiselle George, made her début when she was only twelve years old. For a time she led so loose a life that her art suffered, and in 1776 she disappeared from the stage for a while, to turn up again three years later. During the revolution, having royalist inclinations, she spent six months in prison, but at length was set at liberty through the influence of some of her friends. The First Consul admired her art; but in 1814, forgetting the benefits she had received from him, she went over to the Bourbon side. She died on January 15, 1815.

sity of tragic passion the young girl showed, and carried her off to Paris to train her there. Joséphine's father had designed to make the girl a singer, but Raucourt held other views. On the whole, Weimer was glad enough to be freed from the cost of training his daughter. "We were poor, very, very poor," says Mademoiselle George in her memoirs. She could not have found a better teacher than Sophie Raucourt, but her patroness was not a good model in the conduct of life. Sophie was very free in her ways, and rumour ran that she had more inclination towards persons of her own sex than towards men.

The training of the young actress did not take long. About a year later, on the eighth Frimaire of the year XI (November 29, 1802), Marguerite Joséphine Weimer, who had adopted her father's baptismal name George[3] as a stage name, made her debut at the Comédie Française as Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia in Aulis*. It seemed impossible that this girl of fifteen, whose chief amusement so recently had been, like that of any guttersnipe, to play the game of runaway-rings at the Parisian house doors, could act Racine's Clytemnestra. But she did the impossible with wonderful success. We read in the "Mercure de France," during this month of Frimaire in the year XI, that "her beauty, her tall distinguished figure, the wonderful poise of her head upon the shoulders, her beautiful, regular, and pleasing face, have taken Paris by storm."

As far as dramatic talent was concerned, her triumph was less notable. Her voice was by no means pleasing. Much greater actresses had preceded her in the rôle; and she had an extraordinarily gifted rival in Mademoiselle Duchesnois. The Parisians, however, are usually content with a beautiful exterior! Geoffroy, the dramatic critic, who was not much moved by her talent, lavished praises on her beauty, likening her to Apollo's sister. "But when we heard the first words that fell from her lips, our ears were less charmed than our eyes had been. The inevitable excitement of such a moment had made her voice, which is naturally full of tone and able to carry a long

[3] She always wrote it George, and not Georges.

way, rough and uncontrolled. Besides, it was impossible that a girl of her age, appearing for the first time before so brilliant a public, should be able to make the best use of her capacities."

Such was Joséphine Weimer's first appearance in Paris. Subsequently the press was less kind to her, and a fierce contest raged round her and Duchesnois. Nevertheless on August 4, 1803, Mademoiselle George was permanently engaged at the Comédie Française at a salary of four thousand francs a year; and a year later both she and Duchesnois became "sociétaires" of the theatre.

A few weeks after her debut at the Comédie Française, she made a debut of another kind in the rooms above the Orangerie at Saint-Cloud. Her account of the matter is that she paid two or three visits to the First Consul's private apartments before she acceded to his wishes; but we may well be sceptical as to the literal truth of an elderly actress's memoirs in this matter.[4] Besides, for

[4] Mademoiselle George did not write her memoirs until she was seventy years old. Since neither her grammar nor her spelling was trustworthy, she asked a colleague, Marcelline Desbordes-Valmore, to edit what she wrote. The manuscript ran to 170 pages. But Valmore, who had writings of her own to attend to, forgot her friend's memoirs, and George's manuscript did not come to light till January 31, 1903, when a collection of documents belonging to a son of the sometime theatrical manager Tom Harel was sold. The manuscript contains a description of four nights spent by Mademoiselle George at Saint-Cloud. As to the truth of the confessions recorded in this document, Pierre Berton, on July 13, 1908, wrote to Camille Le Senne the following letter, which I publish here by permission of Monsieur Hector Fleischmann.

"No, dear Monsieur Le Senne, no; Mademoiselle George was no liar. She was perfectly frank, frank to the verge of cynicism, without being coarse. She had the agreeable frankness of the distinguished ladies of her day, for she had very distinguished manners. She had no wish to deck herself out with virtues she did not possess; and she spoke of herself with the same freedom with which most people speak of others. Still, your fine critical sense has not led you astray. The passages in the memoirs which deal with her love for the First Consul have been somewhat sophisticated —though quite unintentionally on her part.

"I actually saw her writing these memoirs on foolscap with blue ink, in her upright handwriting, which remained beautiful to the last. I was the first person to read what she had written. She would have liked to tell the whole story, to do this with a simplicity and shamelessness which were not lacking in grandeur. But she was in receipt of a pension from the Tuileries privy purse, a pension conceded to her through the influence of old King Jerome of Westphalia. . . . Her friends were afraid that this pension, her only means of livelihood, might be taken away from her if she were too indiscreet. They told her that it was no doubt necessary, when she was eighteen, to strip herself naked in order to win the imperial favour, but that at seventy she would do well to to be rather more reserved. Such intimate revelations would arouse displeasure in high places."

her Napoleon was not the first experience. Young though she was, there had been other lovers; not only Brother Lucien, but also the wealthy Polish prince, Sapieha. She would fain have us believe that she was virginally chaste when she gave herself up to Caesar's embraces. But she arrived at Saint-Cloud fully equipped for the part of an emperor's mistress. Her wardrobe might have been compared with that of the wealthiest and most elegant of the ladies of Paris. Chemises of the finest batiste, richly embroidered, and trimmed with real Valenciennes lace; petticoats of India-muslin, light as air; costly nightgowns, made of soft silk, or of transparent material so thin that the garment could be drawn through a finger ring; shawls of English lace that had cost thousands of francs; red and white cashmere shawls; splendid furs: such an array of garments was only just good enough for so royal-seeming a lady as young Mademoiselle George. The "unselfish" Prince Sapieha had provided all this. He had established her and her mother (who had now joined the girl in Paris), in a luxuriously furnished flat in the Rue St. Honoré. He provided her with a carriage and horses; and all he asked in return for these benefactions was—that he might have a spare key to her rooms. At any rate, this is what we are naïvely told by Alexandre Dumas, the champion of her virtue, and by Mademoiselle George herself.

In December 1802, when, sitting beside Constant the valet in the First Consul's carriage, George drove to Saint-Cloud, she did not find there the "dread being" her fancy had pictured. She did not find the man with inflexible will, who even in affairs of love would issue despotic orders; the man who had been described to her as brutal. She found, so she tells us, " an amiable and considerate person." He helped her to disrobe, took off her veil and her cashmere shawl, was kindly and thoughtful, did not wound her by brutal impetuosity, but gave way to her "childish whims." He even played the jealous lover, and tore into a thousand pieces the veil which had been given to her by Prince Sapieha,

He made her tell him the story of her life, and listened

attentively. He was pleased to find that she did not embroider the facts—that her story tallied with the information he had gleaned from other sources. "Poor child, you knew what poverty was," he said compassionately, thus winning all the young actress's sympathy.

At the opening of their conversation he asked her name. Since, however, for obvious reasons, the name of Joséphine did not suit him for his mistress, he begged her permission to call her Giorgina. Naturally, the girl was only too glad to agree. She was quite agreeable to whatever he wanted, and promised that she would never again put on anything that had been given her by one of her other admirers. Above all, he said, Prince Sapieha must be excluded from her circle. Giorgina was glad enough to comply. Though Sapieha was a prince, he was not First Consul!

Next day, all Paris knew that Mademoiselle George had visited Saint-Cloud, and that she had had the pleasure of seeing the master of the world at her feet. A few days later, when the First Consul attended the representation of *Cinna,* and when Mademoiselle George as Emilie declaimed the line

Si j'ai séduit Cinna, j'en séduirai bien d'autres,

the applause was deafening. All heads were turned towards the First Consul's box, and the occupant seemed pleased at a form of homage which was quite new to him.

Giorgina was very much to Napoleon's tastes. This girl of fifteen was already fully developed. She was witty, of gentle disposition, and extraordinarily devoted to him, displaying a wonderful readiness to comply with all his wishes, and boring neither herself nor the First Consul. Constant, the valet, records that he often heard Napoleon laugh heartily when George was there. He was amused at her piquant anecdotes, at the stories the little scandalmonger told him, at her accounts of what happened behind the scenes. She understood very well how to play up to his greatest weakness, curiosity; and in this way she was perhaps able to enchain him longer than her beauty could have done without such aid. In

Giorgina's company he was as merry as a child; and he could play with her more light-heartedly than of old with his comrades in Brienne. She defends him valiantly against the accusation that he was brutal in his treatment of women. "One day," she tells us, "I came to Saint-Cloud. Constant said to me: 'The Consul is upstairs, waiting for you.' I went into the room, but there was no one to be seen. I explored the neighbouring rooms. I called him by name. No answer. Then I said angrily to Constant: 'Has the Consul gone downstairs again?' He answered: 'No, Madame, you just go on looking.' With his eyes, he signalled almost imperceptibly towards the door of the little salon, which I had not yet entered. There I found the Consul, lying buried beneath the pillows on a sofa, and laughing as heartily as any schoolboy."

Another time when she was with him, he wound round his own forehead the garland of white roses with which Giorgina had adorned her dark tresses.

"Don't I look lovely, Giorgina?" he asked laughingly; "I look just like a fly in the milk." Then he trilled with her the duet from *La fausse magie*. In a word, he felt happily at ease in her company; he stepped down from his pedestal to become an ordinary man. In a letter to her friend, Madame Desbordes Valmore, printed by Jules Claretie in the "Journal" 1903, the actress describes her last meeting with her lover before he went off to the camp at Boulogne.

"I was sent for towards eight in the evening," she begins. "When I reached Saint-Cloud I was shown into a room next the bedroom—the first time I had been there. It was the library. The Consul did not keep me waiting long.

" 'I have sent for you earlier than usual, dear Giorgina,' he said, 'I wanted to see you before leaving.'

" 'Mon Dieu, are you going away?'

" 'Yes at five to-morrow morning; to Boulogne. No one knows it yet.'

"We had both seated ourselves on the carpet.

" 'Well, you don't seem particularly sorry about it,' he said.

" 'But I am, very sorry.'

" 'No. You don't mind in the least that I am going away.' Then he placed his hand over my heart, and said, half in vexation and half tenderly: 'This heart does not feel anything for me.' (Mademoiselle George expressly tells us that these were Napoleon's actual words.)

"I was really very much perturbed, and would have given anything if only I could have shed a few tears. But I couldn't cry.

"We were sitting quite close to the fire. I stared at the glowing embers and at the glittering fire-dogs. Thus I sat for a while, as stiff as a mummy. I cannot say whether it was due to the heat of the fire, or whether it was really the outcome of my own sensibilities. You can believe the latter, if you like; but anyhow two great tears fell on my breast. With indescribable tenderness, the First Consul kissed away these tears from my breast; nay, he drank them! What can I say? I can only tell the truth! I was so deeply touched by this proof of love, that I now shed real tears, and sobbed gently.

"What am I to write? He was intoxicated with delight. If, at this moment, I had asked him to give me the Tuileries, he would not have refused. He laughed, played with me, ran round the room, and told me to try and catch him. To keep out of my reach, he climbed up the step-ladder which was used to reach the books on the top shelves. This step-ladder was on castors, so I wheeled him on it all round the room. He laughed, crying: 'You will hurt yourself! Stop; or I shall get angry.' " After this scene, which Giorgina describes so amusingly, she went home with a packet of notes to the amount of forty thousand francs, which Napoleon had given her in taking leave. He did not want his "dear, good Giorgina" to go short of money during his absence.

Napoleon saw Mademoiselle Giorgina very often, and during the first year of their acquaintanceship stayed longer than usual at Saint-Cloud. She assures us that she was summoned to him twice every week, and that she

often stayed with him till dawn. Constant contradicts this, declaring that Mademoiselle George was never more than two or three hours with Napoleon. Stendhal numbers her visits at sixteen.

This much is certain, that Giorgina's visits continued after Napoleon had gone back to the Tuileries. There he received her in the rooms which had formerly been occupied by his secretary Bourrienne. Her coming to the palace made Josephine furiously jealous—for the matter came to Josephine's knowledge despite all precautions. In those days Napoleon still shared his wife's bedroom. She was a shrewd diplomatist, and had been able to persuade him that he would be safer in her company because she slept very lightly, and would instantly hear any suspicious noise. But after he had known Giorgina for some time, Josephine had by degrees learned to accustom herself to the fact that he often came to bed very late, or would sometimes stay away altogether on the pretext that he had extra work to do. Really, Josephine was not deceived. She guessed the truth.

"One day," relates Madame de Rémusat, "we were alone in her drawing-room. It was one in the morning. The Tuileries was absolutely quiet. Suddenly Madame Bonaparte got up and said: 'I can't stay here any longer. I am sure that Mademoiselle George is upstairs. Let us take them by surprise. Follow me. We will go upstairs together.' "

The two women went up the private staircase to the First Consul's apartments. Josephine, devoured by jealousy, hastened on in front. Madame de Rémusat followed more slowly, holding a lighted candle. When she was half-way up, she heard a noise. She was so terrified that she ran downstairs again, taking the candle with her and leaving the inquisitive Josephine on the stairs in the dark. Josephine had no option but to come down likewise, and on this occasion the surprise did not come off.

Another time, chance favoured her. Napoleon had been hard at work all day, and a night spent with Giorgina was not the best way of quieting his nerves. In the middle of the night, he suddenly fainted. Giorgina was terribly

MADEMOISELLE GEORGE
In the Odéon Theatre

alarmed. She did not know what to do. In her anxiety, she cried out at the top of her voice (so Durand, the lady-in-waiting, tells us), and rang the bell furiously. Everyone in the palace was aroused, and people flocked to the room. Josephine, too, was awakened by the noise. Instantly she suspected that her husband was being unfaithful to her, and she hastened to his room. By this time Napoleon had come to himself, and was not a little astonished to find that he was lying in Giorgina's arms in the presence of Josephine—Giorgina being very scantily dressed indeed. He was in a terrible rage. The actress was packed out of the Tuileries with all speed, and the First Consul is said never to have forgiven her for her lack of discretion.

Napoleon never visited Giorgina in her own home. No doubt he did not wish to expose himself to the risk of running across other lovers there. For, though she declares that she was faithful to the First Consul for two years, it seems to be a fact that during this period she had several intimates, one of whom was Coster de Saint-Victor.[5] Napoleon thought it of extreme importance that his love affairs should not attract public notice. That was why he differed from the usual practice of rulers in regard to their mistresses, and kept Giorgina very much in the dark. He never made any official display of his fondness for the pretty actress, and did nothing to single her out from her professional colleagues by any display of his protection. She had no special privileges at the theatre, and did not receive a higher fee than the others when she played at the consular court in Saint-Cloud. When she once ventured to ask him for his portrait, he handed her a napoleon, saying: "Take this. People tell me that it is a very good likeness."

All the same, Giorgina did not go short of money, for there was nothing mean about Napoleon. Still, his pres-

[5] His real name was Jean Baptiste Coster. He was an ardent royalist, and was one of the participants in the throwing of the infernal machine on the third Nivôse in the year IX. He made good his escape to England after this affair, returning to France in 1803 with Georges Cadoudal. Tried with his fellow conspirators, he was condemned to death on June 10, 1804, and was executed on June 25th.

ents to her had a private character. She tells us: "The Emperor never sent me money by a third person, but always gave it to me himself." Only once is her name officially mentioned in the records of the privy purse. This was in the year 1807 when she was no longer the favourite. We are told that she received ten thousand francs as a donation.

When Napoleon had been crowned Emperor, his love for Giorgina waned. He was no longer the same when he met her. It seemed to him that he must now be very ceremonious in his dealings. He was Emperor, and almost involuntarily he let his mistress feel it. "I do not know," writes Mademoiselle George, "why the Emperor has driven away my First Consul. Everything is greater, more imposing; there is no place for happiness in this mansion. Let us seek it elsewhere, if it is anywhere to be found." When Alexandre Dumas once asked her why Napoleon had abandoned her, she answered theatrically: "He left me to become Emperor."

Giorgina did, in fact, seek her happiness elsewhere. In the year 1808 her lover, Count von Benckendorff, sent for her to come to Russia. On May 11th, she suddenly left the opera in company with the dancer, Duport, although she was under contract with the Comédie Française at the time. She thus became liable, not merely to be sued for breach of contract, but also to lose all her rights as a member of the Comédie Française. She was sentenced to a fine of three thousand francs, her share as sociétaire was forfeited, and her name was struck off the list of members. She vanished, leaving behind her in Paris nothing more than her debts and the memory of her liaison with Napoleon.

Court society in St. Petersburg expected great things from the arrival of the Parisian actress. It was supposed that she would lure the Tsar away from the arms of the beautiful, witty, and coquettish Princess Narishkin, wife of the Grand Master of the Horse. The Tsar's persistent fondness for this lady was regarded as disastrous, and it seemed that a transient liaison with Napoleon's ex-mistress would be less dangerous.

Alexander, however, was not greatly pleased by Giorgina's physique, which was somewhat too massive for his taste. He received her amiably enough, gave her a diamond brooch, commanded her to play at Peterhof, but did not care to see her a second time. She had more striking successes among the St. Petersburg nobility. The dowager Empress said that she had "les doigts de l'aurore," overloaded her with kindnesses and gifts, and had her to play as often as possible in the private apartments. Both as artist and as woman, Giorgina rereceived here the highest honours possible. For four years she celebrated triumph after triumph, until at length she had to leave Russia during the war of 1812.

When the news of disasters to the Grand Army reached the Russian capital, and the whole city was illuminated in consequence, Giorgina could not be prevailed upon to light up her house in this way. When Tsar Alexander was informed of her recalcitrance, he said: "Let her alone. She is quite right, being a good Frenchwoman." She returned to France lavishly supplied with money and presents. Colonel Combe says in his memoirs that she had a tiny phial cut out of a single diamond, which alone was worth three hundred thousand francs.

In 1813, Napoleon saw his sometime mistress again in Dresden. He forgave her her flight from the Parisian stage, reinstated her in her position as court actress, and also reinstated her as a member of the Comédie Française, dating this membership from the very beginning, as if she had never been away. On July 1st of the same year she appeared as Phædra at the Dresden court theatre before Napoleon. But she never regained her place in the Emperor's affections. That was a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, for her part, she never ceased to think kindly of him. She had loved him when he was Consul, and looked on him with veneration when he became Emperor. When disaster overtook him, she did not (like so many upon whom Napoleon had showered favours) go over to the Bourbons, but remained an ardent Bonapartist, although this made her position almost untenable. During the Hundred Days, she did her former lover a

political service, telling him that she had papers for him which would give him a great deal of information concerning the doings of Fouché, the sometime Minister of Police. Napoleon sent a trusted emissary to her, and when this man returned bearing the papers in question, the Emperor, knowing that Giorgina was now badly off, asked whether the lady had said anything about monetary matters. "No, Sire," was the answer. "But," rejoined Napoleon, "I know from Caulaincourt that she is short of money. See that she receives twenty thousand francs from my privy purse."

Now for the second time the Emperor played hazard with his throne. Waterloo was the last act of the Napoleonic drama. Napoleon's rôle as hero had been played out. A single day sufficed to overthrow the Empire. France threw herself into the arms of a new ruler. But for Mademoiselle George, there was only one monarch, Napoleon. When, one day, the Duke of Berry called her a "pretty Bonapartist," she said: "Yes, Prince, I shall always be faithful to this cause!"

Her position at the Comédie Française had become impossible. She had to seek in the provinces and abroad the fame which the Parisians refused her. And her search was successful for a time. When she had grown old and had lost her good looks, when there was nothing left of her triumphant beauty, her thoughts often turned to Napoleon; but she did not now think of him as her lover, the lover who had found her beautiful, who had christened her Giorgina, and who, in a paroxysm of jealousy had torn to pieces the veil given to her by Prince Sapieha. No, now the object of her veneration was the Emperor, to whom she looked up as to a god. Her voice trembled when she talked to her friends about him. This woman, once so frivolous, this woman who in general was willing to recount all the details of her numerous love affairs, would not profane the sanctuary of her love for Napoleon by any light words about the matter.

Mademoiselle George had been intimate with a good many men, but had only loved one of them besides the First Consul. This other was Tom Harel, sometime pre-

fect and subsequently theatrical manager. Like her, Harel was expelled from France by the Bourbons. The two lived together for twenty-eight years. They were separated only by Harel's death, which occurred in 1846, after he had already for several years been suffering from softening of the brain. She lived eighteen years longer, being seventy-eight when she died.

Napoleon's "dear and good" Giorgina died poor and forgotten.[6] To the end, she was faithful to the memory of Napoleon. Those who did not know that she had a heart of gold were inclined to turn away from the old woman in disgust, for she had become repulsively stout. Jules Claretie,[7] a leading spirit in French dramatic circles, describes in his *Profils de théâtre* one of those painful performances which the corpulent George was compelled to undertake even in her old age. As a boy, he had seen her play Marie Tudor in Limoges. "It seemed to me," he says, "that this woman dressed in red velvet was much too fat. She was, in fact, enormous." When the scene came in which Marie Tudor falls on her knees, Mademoselle George was unable to get up again. "She leaned forward supporting herself with her hands on the floor and (I can still see her) remained there, breathing stertorously with protruding eyes, and looking like a slaughtered steer, until her colleagues helped her to her feet again." The boy could not help laughing at the sight. "Don't make fun of her," whispered his father, "it is Mademoiselle George." His mother, looking at the actress through her opera glasses said: "Poor woman, she is crying!"

But her friends knew how sterling a character was masked by this hideous exterior. Beyond question she was one of the most attractive of the women who crossed Napoleon's path. A glance at her memoirs will suffice to show the artlessness and childlike honesty of Giorgina's

[6] At first she had an income of frs. 1,000 and subsequently frs. 2,000 procured for her by Jerome in the days of the Second Empire. She also drew a pension as a sometime member of the Comédie Française. But these were pitiful resources for one who had formerly had many thousands to squander.

[7] Born 1840, died 1913. From 1885 till the year of his death he was director of the Théâtre Français.

character. Even though she may have idolized Napoleon in many respects, what we can be sure of is that her own sentiments were noble ones. She had been honoured like a queen; treasures had been poured out at her feet; she had excelled all others in the rôles of Merope, Marie Tudor, Clytemnestra, Emilie, and others; but she had been harshly criticized. Nevertheless she had no feeling of bitterness towards her enemies. Her greatest satisfaction was that she was able to say: "All these memories are dear to me, and I have the sweet consolation of knowing that my feelings have remained unchanged. I am poor, but what does that matter? My heart is rich in memories, and above all rich in devotion to that great family which honoured my youth by its friendship. It is for me the greatest honour in the world that I take my feelings down with me into the grave. Perhaps I shall not have enough money left to provide for my burial. That is likely enough. I was not born to wealth. But my friends will throw a handful of earth upon my coffin, and will adorn it with flowers. What more could I want?"

Thus did it come to pass. The great Emperor's nephew remembered his uncle's mistress, and paid her a last homage in his uncle's name. He defrayed the cost of Giorgina's funeral.

CHAPTER NINE

JOSEPHINE DUCHESNOIS

Almost simultaneously with Mademoiselle George, another star rose at the Comédie Française. The rival, though less beautiful than Giorgina, eclipsed her in talent. Cathérine Joséphine Duchesnois (or Rafuin, this being her father's name, subsequently transformed into Rafin) had nothing but her splendid art to throw into the scale against Mademoiselle George's beauty. Soon, in the press and among the public, there were two camps formed by those who did battle for the merits of their respective heroines. A contemporary writes: "Mademoiselle Duchesnois did not bring upon the stage any of the physical charms that were so greatly esteemed in the years before the revolution. She had a fairly good figure, but nothing out of the common. Her proportions were good, but there was nothing particularly seductive about her appearance. Only when her face was transformed with passion, as it was on the stage, did she become tolerably pleasing in aspect—although even then nothing to boast of." All who ever saw her are agreed as to her ugliness. Alexandre Dumas compared her to one of those earthenware lions which are to be seen on balustrades; and Alfonse de Lamartine says that she was a tall, thin, pale, and very ugly woman, with long black hair, which crowned her forehead like a diadem. Only Stendhal tells us that she was less hideous than he had expected, and he goes on to say that her art was unparalleled. Mademoiselle Duchesnois was ten years older than Mademoiselle George, and she had therefore nothing to counterbalance the charms of her rival beyond her dramatic talent and her lovely voice, which, when she was deeply moved, had a profound influence. She was also extremely intelligent, as the "Courrier de Spectacle" was fond of insisting. At her debut on the sixteenth Thermidor of the year X (August 3, 1802), the cele-

brated Talma was electrified by her acting, and excelled himself with such a Phædra to play up to; never had the French theatre seen a more dread Orestes. On the stage, Mademoiselle Duchesnois changed so much that she—at ordinary times so plain—looked both charming and distinguished.

Joséphine Duchesnois's debut at the Comédie Française lasted five months. During this period she played various rôles, and in all of them was received by the public with the greatest enthusiasm. On November 8, 1802, she had a positive ovation, and Naudet, who was impersonating Theseus, had to stop his own performance in order to place a laurel crown on Mademoiselle Duchesnois's head. The critics were just enough to admit the excellence of her acting, and, indeed, would not have dared to say anything ill-natured of this darling of the public. When Geoffroy once went so far as to say that Mademoiselle George was a head and shoulders better than Mademoiselle Duchesnois, there was general indignation. Countess Pauline de Beaumont, almost affronted, wrote as follows to Pasquier, the prefect of police:

"I have breakfasted with Mademoiselle Duchesnois, and have been literally charmed by her. I cannot forgive those who find her stupid. She is simple, frank, and absent-minded. But if you succeed in arousing her interest, her eyes brighten, and her face grows beautiful. Then she speaks well and concisely. She understands very well whatever you say to her. But you must know how to touch the sensitive spot. In her relationships with men she is full of dignity, and is very forthcoming towards women. Beyond question this behaviour is not that of a stupid woman."

Stendhal, who was introduced to her after the performance of *Agamemnon* on the fourth Floréal of the year IV, found her charming. Subsequently he wrote most enthusiastically about her splendid eyes, having been enthralled by their "unearthly beauty."

Such was the actress whose art aroused the utmost enthusiasm in Paris. Her fame reached the Tuileries, and made its way into the private apartments of the

First Consul, which had so often been graced by the classical beauty of Giorgina. One evening, about two years after the lady's debut, Napoleon had visited the Comédie Française and had admired Duchesnois's acting. After the performance he had his compliments conveyed to her, and said that in the course of the next few days he should like her to play in *Nicoméde* before him. While still under the spell of the actress's tragical beauty, he summoned her to the Tuileries the same evening. To him she was not Mademoiselle Duchesnois, but the personality she had been representing on the stage. His fancy decked her out with all the merits which the playwright had attributed to the heroine.

The great man's wish was a command. The actress duly arrived to receive Caesar's homage. But Caesar, meanwhile, had seated himself at his study table, and had become wholly immersed in his work there. When Duchesnois's arrival was announced to him, he had already forgotten that he had invited her. The temporary intoxication was over. He sent a message to the effect that he was busy at the moment, but would come soon; meanwhile she could undress.

This was not an enthusiastic reception for Mademoiselle Duchesnois, to whom all Paris paid the honours of a princess. The man who was sitting there busied at his study table was treating her no better than if she had been a street-walker, and was not taking the least trouble to throw a decent mask over the purpose for which he had summoned her. Joséphine Duchesnois found this kind of gallantry rather strange, somewhat brutal. These were the manners of a camp—and yet the message came to her from the First Consul! She must obey him; she must bow to his will, however much she was queen before the footlights. Mademoiselle Duchesnois obeyed. Mechanically she removed one garment after another until very little was left to take off, in the huge unwarmed bedroom, with its great four-poster and broad divan, its mirrors and its chandeliers—the room which had inspired Mademoiselle George with so much alarm. There stood Duchesnois, shivering in the cold September night, waiting.

Hour after hour passed away. The First Consul did not come. Deep in his work, he seemed to have completely forgotten her.

At length the poor woman plucked up courage, and asked Constant, the valet, to remind the First Consul that she was still there. Constant discharged his commission, but Napoleon, still busily at work, answered snappishly: "Tell her to put on her clothes and go home!"

Work was his element. Everything else must give way to it. This man, of whom the same Constant says that he endowed with poesy all that related to the sensual, now seemed brutal and cynical in his words and deeds. Yet Napoleon was, in truth, anything but cynical. His tendency was rather in the direction of sentimentalism, but woe to anyone who disturbed him at his work. Perhaps, too, he had remembered, though a trifle late, what he had once said to Lucien: "There is no reason why our wives should be beautiful. But as for our mistresses, that is another story. An ugly mistress is loathsome. She fails to fulfil her very first, I might say her only, duty." Deeply wounded, Mademoiselle Duchesnois left the Tuileries in a rage, left the palace where her first visit had ended so lamentably. She vowed that never again would she set foot in those private apartments, not even if she were to be offered all the treasures of the world. Her vow was needless, for Napoleon never invited her again. He admired her talents as an actress, but had no interest in her as a woman. But the Empress Josephine was a good patroness to Joséphine Duchesnois. The royal mantle in which Mademoiselle Duchesnois played the part of Phædra was a present from Napoleon's wife; and it was to the latter's good offices that the actress owed her nomination (in conjunction with Mademoiselle George, on March 17, 1804) to the membership of the Comédie Française. But not until after Giorgina's flight in the year 1808, did Duchesnois attain the position warranted by her abilities.

Joséphine Duchesnois was no less great as a human being than as an actress. She had a most kindly heart,

and, though of lowly origin, in the days of her good fortune she did not forget the sufferings of the poor. She was always willing to give performances for charitable purposes. Of simple tastes, she shunned luxurious living, and was never extravagant. Nor did she like to make herself conspicuous. A noted French historian declares that before she went on the stage she had been one of those unhappy creatures who, leading joyless lives in public brothels, are spoken of as "filles de joie." Evidence in support of this assertion is lacking, and it is based upon the casual utterance of an unnamed contemporary. Henri Lyonnet makes no mention of anything of the kind.

She was born on June 5, 1777, in Saint-Saulves near Valenciennes. Her father was a cattle-dealer and her mother kept a tavern in the village of Marquis, near Mons. She never went to school; an old woman in the village taught her the elements of reading and writing. She had to go out to work when quite young, and became a maidservant in Valenciennes. Then she became a sempstress, working at first in Valenciennes and subsequently in Paris. We may suppose that her lack of good looks made it comparatively easy for her to remain what is called an honest woman. When the revolution began, Joséphine Rafuin was living with her sister in Paris. After the ninth Thermidor, she returned to Valenciennes, and seems there to have first made up her mind to go on the stage. How she managed to take up this career remains obscure. But on January 10, 1797, she made her first appearance in a theatre, and enjoyed her first triumph. Thereafter she studied elocution in Paris, first at Florence's school of dramatic art, then under Vigée, the poet, and under the elder Legouvé. These teachers developed her talent to the full. Vigée's sister, the celebrated painter, Vigée-Lebrun, gives some account of the young artist in her memoirs. "My brother," she writes, "was at that time giving lessons in elocution to Mademoiselle Duchesnois. One day he brought her to see me, and made her recite a few passages in my salon. We were all

delighted with her talent, and were astonished that she had not yet been engaged at the Comédie Française. It cannot be denied that Mademoiselle Duchesnois was by no means pretty, but I could not doubt that the public would forget that she was ill-favoured as soon as she began to play her part on the stage. Since at that time I myself had very little influence, I applied to Madame de Montesson, who was high in Bonaparte's good graces. To this lady I sang the praises of my young actress so fervently that she invited Duchesnois to perform at one of her soirées. Everyone was delighted with her acting, and M. de Valence[1] at once arranged for Mademoiselle Duchesnois to appear at the Comédie Française. At length our protégée had been started on her career."

At the Comédie Française, Josephine Duchesnois made her first appearance on the the sixteenth Thermidor of the year X as Phædra, and remained attached to the Comédie Française for twenty-eight years. Ultimately illness compelled her to retire. She was in poor circumstances when she died in Paris on January 8, 1835, leaving two sons and one daughter. Her eldest boy, Henri Achille Rafin, was the son of Casimir Baecker, himself adopted son of the celebrated Madame de Genlis; the younger boy, Anatole Charles Cyrus Rafin was probably the son of Alexis de Lawoestine, himself a grandson of Madame de Genlis. Duchesnois's daughter, Rosemonde Joséphine, was the offspring of a liaison with Charles Gelinet, a major in the infantry.

[1] Cyrus Marie Alexandre de Timbrune-Thimbronne, Count of Valence, stepson of Madame de Genlis.

COURT LADIES AND COMPANIONS

CHAPTER TEN

THE MYSTERY OF SAINT-CLOUD

Napoleon's appetite for the ladies of the theatre was sated by his experiences with Signorina Grassini, Mademoiselle George, and Mademoiselle Duchesnois. His fleeting encounters with the ugly but gifted singer Madame Branchu; with Mademoiselle Bourgoin, the light-hearted mistress of Chaptal (the minister of State); and subsequently with Mademoiselle Mars, of whom the Emperor said at a later day to General Gourgaud that she would have pleased him best of all the actresses he had known—occupied too brief a space in Napoleon's life to be worthy of detailed consideration here. We must also mention that the lovely and famous Ida de Saint-Elme, according to her own assertion, had intimate relationships with Napoleon. But as for these odalisques, during their visits to the seraglio they had just enough time to loosen their girdles and receive the pasha's kisses before departing as unnoticed as they had come.

When Napoleon became Emperor, it was no longer necessary for him to choose his mistresses from among the heroines of the stage. Although there was no Iphigenia at his court, no Clytemnestra, no Lucrezia, and no Juliet, still there was no lack there of young, beautiful, high-spirited, and accommodating ladies, who were thrilled, and filled with pride and happiness, by a glance from this great and strange man. Although there were many who dreaded the Emperor, there were many others who admired him. Some were driven into Napoleon's arms by ambition or a love for intrigue. Others were curious to know how this man who guided states and won battles, this man of unbending will, would react to the charm of a gentle voice, to the caresses of a soft hand. They wondered how he could make love. Napoleon, therefore, could take his pick from among the ladies-in-waiting and the companions of the Empress Joséphine and his sisters.

One of the first among this category was Madame de Barberot de Vellexon de Vaudey. She belonged to the old nobility of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and was one of the most beautiful women at the young imperial court. She was, however, capricious, exacting, and extravagant. Having a taste for gambling, she was unfortunate enough to lose vast sums of money at this amusement, and was therefore perpetually short of money. Her imperial lover had continually to come to her aid. It is true that Napoleon was generous to his mistresses, but he did not like to be asked in plain terms for money. Madame de Vaudey's exactions were too much even for an emperor's treasury. "I am not wealthy enough," he said, "to have so costly a mistress." For this reason, her reign as favourite was brief. When, one day, she made reiterated demands for fifty thousand francs which she had lost at the gaming table, adding that she would shoot herself if he did not grant her request, Napoleon gave her her dismissal. She got the fifty thousand francs but was told to resign her post as lady-in-waiting, and was never again admitted to the private apartments. She took her revenge by turning royalist again.[1]

Mademoiselle Lacoste, a charming blonde, of whom Mademoiselle Avrillon says that she combined much wit with a seductive cheerfulness, and some of the other companions, such as Mademoiselle Guillebeau, Mademoiselle de Mathis, and Mademoiselle de Barral (the two last named were companions to Princess Pauline), were no happier as regards the durability of their liaison with Napoleon than Madame de Vaudey had been. Josephine brought the idyll with Mademoiselle Lacoste to a close by tearfully demanding that the girl should be sent home. Mademoiselle Guillebeau met with a similar fate.

Napoleon's intimacy with Madame Duchâtel was of longer duration, and would seem to have been the outcome of something stronger than transient inclination.

[1] Madame de Vaudey, many years later, published memoirs in which she related all the ill-natured scandal she could think of regarding the Emperor and his entourage. The work was published in Paris in the year 1848, and was entitled, *Souvenirs du Directoire et de l'Empire par Madam le Baronne de V. . . .*

She had recently been married to Duchâtel, an elderly councillor of State, who, as the Duchess of Abrantes remarked, was old enough to be his wife's father. Madame Duchâtel was lady-in-waiting to Josephine. For a long time her name was kept secret by the writers of contemporary memoirs. Madame Junot refers to her as Madame D——; so does Constant, the valet. Madame de Rémusat speaks of her with three asterisks, without any initial at all; and elsewhere she refers to a Madame X—— whom we are inclined to identify with Madame Duchâtel. Lewis Goldsmith is exceptional amongst these writers in giving Madame Duchâtel's full name in his *Secret History of the Cabinet of Bonaparte.* He also describes a scandalous scene which he declares to have taken place between the two lovers the day after their union was entered into; but the crude mendacity of the story serves only to betray the animus of this unscrupulous pamphleteer.

Napoleon did his utmost to keep the liaison secret. In the first place, he did not wish to embarrass Madame Duchâtel's relationships with her husband, the pair being on excellent terms. In the second place, he wished to avoid inflaming Josephine's boundless jealousy. So circumspect was he that when he visited the fair one in Saint-Cloud, he would go to her room on tip-toe in his stockinged feet late at night, when everyone else in the palace was fast asleep. He would not even allow Constant to light his way, but carried the candle in his own hand, ready to blow it out at any suspicious noise. Since Josephine's spies were ever on the alert, he ran a great chance of being caught. "One day," writes Constant, "dawn had come and the Consul had not yet returned to his room. Since I wished to avoid any scandal, I carried out the orders he had given me in the event of any such happening, and told Madame D——'s maid to let her mistress know what o'clock it was. Within five minutes, the Consul returned, very much put out. I was soon to learn the cause of his excitement. On his way back he had seen one of Josephine's women, who was watching through the

window of a little closet which opened on the passage. After an outburst of wrath anent the inquisitiveness of the fair sex, he sent me to the young watcher from the hostile camp with instructions to tell her that she had better hold her tongue if she wanted to keep her place in the palace."

This time Napoleon got off with nothing more than a fright, for the spy was astute enough to keep the matter to herself—perhaps because she was bribed to do so, or perhaps Napoleon's threat of dismissal was sufficient.

But these wanderings through the passages of the palace seemed to Napoleon, after a while, too dangerous, and he ordered Constant to rent for Madame Duchâtel a little house in the Allée des Veuves, in the Champs Elysées, where Napoleon visited her occasionally. But from time to time Madame Duchâtel was still received in the private apartments. The intimacy between Napoleon and this lady-in-waiting began during the Consulate, towards the close of the year 1803; but their relationships became still more passionate in the days of the Empire.

The young woman had all the qualities likely to please a man. She was about twenty-five years of age, of medium height, slender, graceful, fair-haired, and of a delicate mould. Her blue eyes were capable of every shade of expression except that of frankness. Uprightness was not part of her character. She was a great actress, and could appear with the most innocent demeanour in Josephine's drawing-room immediately after leaving Napoleon's private apartments. She was cold rather than passionate. Her expression was proud, and she had perfect self-control. But beneath her mask of unapproachability she was a coquette. She was fond of showing her pearly teeth, for she knew how seductive her mouth was when she smiled. Her hands were beautifully white, and her feet were small. She was a splendid dancer, played the lute, and had a lovely voice. She was not overburdened with intelligence, but did not lack cunning and resource.

Another besides Napoleon seems to have noted these charms. The Emperor's step-son, Eugene Beauharnais,

paid his court to Madame Duchâtel, and she, for diplomatic reasons, made as if his affection was returned. In reality all she wanted was to make use of Eugene in order to set Josephine on a false track, for poor Josephine was tortured by jealousy. The Empress strongly suspected that her husband and the lady-in-waiting had an understanding, but proof was lacking. For a time her suspicions had fallen on the wife of Marshal Ney.

When Eugene came to realize that Madame Duchâtel was only playing with him, and was merely using him as cover, he drew back profoundly mortified. Soon, however, the lady found other and willing confederates in her plot. Caroline and Murat were glad to give their aid in keeping secret the lady's meetings with the Emperor. Murat pretended to be in love with Duchâtel, and Caroline lent a hand in arranging for Napoleon's trysts with the lady.

But for Josephine, no net was too finely woven. Her jealous ear was listening at every door, and her suspicious eyes were always on the watch to catch the guilty lovers in the act. In Saint-Cloud, during the early days of the Consulate, Napoleon had had a set of rooms arranged in the story above that in which his own apartments were, and connected with these by a private staircase. "Naturally, it was not difficult for Josephine to guess for what this secret retreat was intended," writes Madame de Rémusat. In actual fact, she had more than once surprised Napoleon and Giorgina there, and we can well imagine that thenceforward the privy chambers were watched with argus eyes. One day, fortune favoured her. She had long since ceased to suspect the virtuous Madame Ney, although Napoleon often talked to this lady. But it was plain that Madame Duchâtel was singled out by the Emperor. His way of looking at and speaking to the lovely lady-in-waiting soon put Josephine on the right track, especially since he had ever less and less control over his manner towards his charmer. At dinner he would tell her to avoid eating this or that, since it might be bad for her health. In the drawing-room he

would stand behind her chair, was gallant and amiable, flattered her; and even though he would pay similar attentions to Madame de Rémusat, Madame Junot, or Madame Ney, Josephine know perfectly well that he did not care for them but only for Duchâtel. Her woman's instinct told her this, and she redoubled her watchfulness.

Every evening, the Emperor would invite Madame Duchâtel, Caroline Murat, and Madame de Rémusat to take a hand with him at cards. But instead of beginning to play, he would encourage the young women to embark upon a sentimental conversation concerning love, fidelity, or jealousy. Every word, every sentence, was designed for its effect on his mistress, who only answered in monosyllables, while her eyes spoke far more eloquently than her tongue. Meanwhile Josephine sat in another corner of the room, also at the card table with her ladies. She played mechanically, regardless of the game. With burning glances and death in her heart, she gazed intently at her husband and Madame Duchâtel. But there was nothing to complain of in the latter's demeanour towards the Emperor. She was reserved and cold, and yet in this very reserve was hidden a dangerous coquetry. Her glances were softer and more veiled than ever, her smile more insidious, her answers more cautious and calculating, and the elegance of her dress became more marked day by day.

At length came an occasion when Madame Duchâtel suddenly, without giving a reason, left the Empress's salon. Josephine marked her going. Suspicion rose to fever heat. After a time, since Madame Duchâtel did not return, the Empress also left the drawing-room, and went straight to the Emperor's study. She was told he was not there. Much agitated, she hastened up the winding staircase to the apartments on the upper floor. The door of these was locked, but through it she could hear the voice of her husband and of the lady-in-waiting. Poor Josephine was beside herself. Desperately she knocked at the door, and in a voice choked with tears called out her name. Silence for a while, and then the door was

opened. Napoleon stood there, furiously angry, and behind him was Madame Duchâtel.

Napoleon's rage at his wife's indiscretion knew no bounds. Josephine, weeping bitterly, fled back to her own apartments, trembling at the scene she had conjured up. Napoleon soon followed her to her boudoir, still in a passion, and raged at her while she sobbed. In his fury he smashed two or three ornaments on which his hand happened to light. Wearied of her continued spying, he began to speak of getting a divorce. His policy made this step necessary; he must have a wife who could bear him children. Josephine had better learn to accommodate herself to his diversions. He was not like other men, and would not allow anyone to impose conditions on him. Josephine could make no answer but tears. The dread word divorce had made her tremble. She was submissive. Moved by her tears, Napoleon grew gentler. He comforted her, and left her almost pacified.

All the same, he continued to see Madame Duchâtel in private, and seemed for a time no less interested in her than before. But her hour, too, had struck. Bellilote, Giorgina, and others, had come and gone; Madame Duchâtel was to go likewise.

At Malmaison, where Josephine had played him false in the days when he loved her so ardently, the fires of his passon for Madame Duchâtel were to die down. In the latter half of February 1805, a whim made him go and stay at Malmaison. There he paraded in the park quite openly with his mistress on his arm. Josephine, meanwhile, who had cried her eyes red, watched the lovers from the window of her boudoir. Madame Duchâtel was cruel, and seemed to take a peculiar pleasure in torturing the poor Empress. Neglecting all the dictates of caution, she gloried in displaying her position as favourite before the world; or did she, perhaps, realize that her reign was drawing to a close?

Anyhow these were to be the last days which the lovers spent together. Josephine was no longer to suffer from Duchâtel's rivalry. Napoleon had pity on his wife's

tears. Maybe he was growing weary of Duchâtel, or perhaps he feared she would gain too much influence over him. Women were not to play any notable part at his court. One day, therefore, when he found Josephine in tears, he confessed all his sins. Josephine, kindly, weak, and loving, forgave him. She was glad that this liaison had not quite expelled her image from Napoleon's heart. She was proud that he had given her his confidence, and even promised to help him in putting an end to the liaison. Poor Josephine! Did she not realize that the end of one liaison would only mean the beginning of another?

But she kept her word. Next day she sent for Madame Duchâtel. Talking to her like a mother, Josephine told her how unwise her behaviour had been, how easily she could damage her reputation, how young and thoughtless she was—and so on. Madame Duchâtel remained cold, and did not display the slightest agitation. Brazening the matter out, she flatly denied all that the Empress had implied. Although she knew that the whole court was perfectly well informed about her relationships with Napoleon, she was neither embarrassed nor depressed, but seemed prouder than ever. The Emperor, for his part, appeared to have completely forgotten his mistress. He hardly ever spoke to her again. Are we to suppose that he was ashamed because love, which he had declared was not for him, had on this occasion held him prisoner so long?

As time passed, Josephine became more tranquil. Napoleon had adopted her son Eugene, and this seemed to her a guarantee that she would retain her position as Empress. She grew less prone to suffer from jealous fears that a younger wife might present him with an heir. When she became convinced that such a man as Napoleon lacked both time and inclination for serious love affairs, she was ready to pardon him for transient infidelities, being certain that she always occupied the first place in his heart. She would even seem to have favoured intimacies between her husband and some of the younger ladies about her court, or, at any rate, to

have taken such matters lightly. She accepted these divagations philosophically, and bowed to the will of fate. She no longer remembered, it would seem, that she herself had once played Napoleon false. People are never so severe in their judgement of their own faults!

When the whim seized him, Napoleon would tell her about his amourettes; at other times, he would keep his own counsel about them; and she was never disturbed either way. When he saw Madame Duchâtel again after the battle of Austerlitz, Josephine was not jealous, or at least did not allow her jealousy to appear. She treated her rival amiably, like any other lady about the court. Besides, Napoleon's intimacy with Madame Duchâtel in the year 1806 was so transient that it hardly attracted attention. Her part as favourite had been played. At Napoleon's court, women were to have no other dominion than that of beauty. Directly they tried to be anything more than woman in their relationships with the great man, they were given their congé.

None the less Madame Duchâtel was one of those who remained faithful to the wounded lion. During the Hundred Days, she adorned his court by her beauty, her charm, and her elegance; and she mourned when the Emperor was forced to leave the shores of France for ever.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GENOESE BEAUTY

Except for the period when Napoleon was so ardently in love with Josephine, Italian women always exercized a peculiarly strong attraction on him. Giuseppina Grassini, the Milanese nightingale, was not the only one upon whom the Emperor's amorous glances fell. True that pretty Madame Visconti had once vainly attempted to harness the general to her chariot, and had had to be content with the deep and honest affection of Berthier; but that was during the time when Napoleon had eyes only for Josephine. In later days, he had merely to hold out his hand to the lovely daughters of Italy, for these, when he was staying in that land, to throw themselves at his feet.

When he was crowned king of Italy in the year 1805, the Italian cities he visited on his journey vied with one another in paying him reverence as the man who had restored Italian greatness and freedom. Festival followed hard upon festival, and wherever he went he celebrated a triumph. In Genoa, which he reached on June 30th, he took up his quarters in the Palazzo Durazzo and slept in Charles V's bed. On July 2nd, on the occasion of the festival to celebrate the union of the Ligurian Republic with France, Genoa sent him a deputation composed of the most beautiful and most distinguished women in the city. This seemed to the Genoese the greatest honour they could pay the Emperor and King. But since, in choice of beauties, birth had not entered into their consideration, it happened that among the ladies who came to pay their respects to Napoleon was Carlotta Gazzani, the daughter of a dancer. Though she was already thirty-two, she was still superlatively beautiful, and might have been a daughter of the three graces.

Carlotta was tall and slender (perhaps, like Madame

Duchâtel, almost too slender), but extraordinarily charming. Her head, framed in dark tresses, resembled that of a woman of classical Rome. "Her dark skin was sometimes rather too brightly tinted by the vigorous current of her blood, but her features were so entrancing that one could not wish for the slightest change in her appearance. Her eyes were glorious, and gave apt expression to all that she said and felt. The only thing to complain of were her hands, which were not as pretty as they might have been, and for this reason she almost always wore gloves. Her teeth were dazzlingly white; . . . but her feet were not very well formed." Such is the testimony of Georgette Ducrest, niece of Madame de Genlis; and Mademoiselle Avrillon exclaims with delight: "One must have seen Madame Gazzani, to form the least idea of her amazing beauty!" Many other women agreed in this testimony. Even Madame de Rémusat, who is fonder of criticizing than praising, says of Carlotta Gazzani: "She was very gentle, and accommodating rather than selfish. . . . Her success with the Emperor did not make her at all exacting. . . . She was the loveliest woman at a court where there was no lack of lovely women. Never have I seen more beautiful eyes, more beautiful features; and never have I seen a more attractive harmony of the whole face!"

Napoleon, having seen Madame Gazzani, asked her (some say that the suggestion came from Talleyrand and others from Rémusat) to come with him to Paris, where she should take the place of the dismissed Mademoiselle Lacoste[1] as companion, or rather reader, to Josephine.

The title of reader to the Empress was more absurd in the case of the Genoese beauty than it had been in the case of any of the other ladies who had previously held that office. Apart from the fact that none of them ever read aloud to the Empress, since Josephine had no taste for being read to, Madame Gazzani would have been a particularly bad reader, since she could speak only broken French. But the Emperor wanted her to occupy

[1] The Emperor subsequently married off Lacoste to a rich banker.

the post. He had always had a predilection for these ladies, and had chosen three of his mistresses from among them. In addition, Madame Gazzani was officially appointed supervisor of the Empress's diamonds. Unofficially, Mademoiselle Avrillon, lady-of-the-bedchamber to Josephine, and the Empress's confidante, kept the keys of her mistress's jewel case.

Carlotta accepted her position at court without a word of remonstrance, just as she did whatever the Emperor told her to do in other matters. She was one of those people of a submissive temperament, who can never say no when asked to do anything. Her devotion to Napoleon was unstinted, though she had no particular love, or even affection, for him. She did not covet the position of Emperor's mistress, and did not try in any way to turn that position to account. Her official appointment was not highly paid, the salary being only five hundred francs a month. The utmost she achieved, and that merely because Napoleon wished it, was a good post for her husband, who became paymaster general of the department of Eure—a post which brought in a good supplementary income in addition to the regular salary. A further advantage of Gazzani's appointment to this post was that it removed the superfluous husband from the court where there was a place only for the wife. He was got out of the way much as Lieutenant Fourès had been in Egypt but with better success.

When Madame Gazzani made her entry into the Tuileries after Napoleon's return from Italy, she did not find it easy to get a firm footing in court society. Her splendid beauty, and her amiable simplicity, put the other ladies in the shade, and naturally aroused their jealousy. At the Empress Josephine's public receptions, to which, by Napoleon's command, the companions were admitted, notwithstanding their modest position at court, when the Genoese beauty appeared by the side of the duchesses, princesses, countesses, and baronesses, old and new, these titled ladies would draw aside their skirts, as if dreading to be soiled by contact with the dancer's daughter.

Madame de la Rochefoucauld was infuriated on one occasion because Madame Gazzani had ventured to sit in the same pew with her in church.

It was not long, however, before the report of Gazzani's intimacy with the Emperor became current. Talleyrand, whom Napoleon had taken into his confidence, saw to it that the piquant little stories which his chief sometimes confided to him should be bruited abroad. Suddenly Carlotta was much sought after. Her drawing-room was filled with the most highly respected and most distinguished personalities of the court. The beautiful woman was surrounded by a circle of admirers, who did not forget to follow her when she was driving in her fine four-in-hand in the Bois de Boulogne or in the Champs Elysées. One of her greatest friends, the man who subsequently became Marshal de Castellane, tells us that the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, in later days King of the Belgians, was one of the most frequent of Carlotta Gazzani's visitors. But all this attention came to an end directly she ceased to be in the Emperor's good graces.

Josephine knew about the intimacy, just as she had known about earlier ones. But now she closed her eyes to the matter, only troubling to make a little display of jealousy at the outset, when she was perhaps afraid that Carlotta was going to acquire great influence over Napoleon. As a rule, the Emperor received Gazzani, whose dwelling was conveniently near at hand, in the rooms which had formerly been inhabited by his secretary, Bourrienne. They were connected with his own bedroom by a flight of stairs, so that he could keep tryst with her unnoticed, whilst his inamorata had entered the suite by the so-called "black staircase." Sometimes Napoleon visited her in her own rooms.

These assignations were separated by long intervals, partly because between 1805 and 1807 the Emperor was campaigning most of the time, and partly because his fondness for Carlotta was never intense. He had not for her a great passion, such as that for Madame Duchâtel or for Madame Walewska.

One evening Josephine, driven by curiosity, came to her husband's room, and found it empty. Being suspicious, as usual, she asked Constant where the Emperor was. The valet replied: "His Majesty is working in his study with one of the ministers, and has given orders that he is not to be disturbed, that even the Empress is not to be admitted."

"Constant, I must see him!" said Josephine obstinately.

"Quite impossible. I have express orders not to disturb His Majesty, not even if Your Majesty the Empress should ask."

Josephine took her departure, but returned half an hour later, and again insisted that she must see the Emperor. Constant, however, stood to his guns, so that this time she was less fortunate than she had been formerly when Madame Duchâtel was concerned. But she must have certainty at any cost, and therefore she had recourse to strategem. A little later she told her husband that Constant had betrayed him, and had confided to her who the "minister" was with whom Napoleon had been working. But the Emperor was as familiar with Josephine's cunning as he was with his valet's discretion, and he did not fall into the trap. When, for form's sake he asked Constant about the matter, and Constant insisted that the Empress was misrepresenting what had happened, Napoleon said: "I never believed her. I know you well enough, and am sure that I can trust you to hold your tongue. But whoever has been gossiping will rue it if I can find out!"

For a while Josephine was sulky towards the companion, but the Empress's disfavour did not last long. Josephine soon realized that there was no danger for herself in the intimacy, that Carlotta Gazzani was not the woman to expel her image from Napoleon's heart. He did not love the Italian. His interest in her was ephemeral; his feelings were not really involved. Perhaps even his senses were very little attracted, and she represented nothing more to him than the satisfaction of an animal need. To this man who repudiated love, but

who was in truth more than most a thrall to love, Madame Gazzani was merely a makeshift always at his disposal when desire suddenly awoke in him. Carlotta was devoted, submissive, in short a very convenient mistress—one who made no claims. She did not parade her position as favourite, as her countrywoman Giuseppina Grassini had done. That was why this intimacy, although it continued for two years, passed almost unnoticed at court. Besides, at public receptions Napoleon paid no particular attention to the Italian.

By the end of the year 1807, he had grown weary of Carlotta. Walewska, the Polish countess, had now aroused in him a far deeper passion than he was capable of feeling for the Genoese beauty. Already in 1806 he had forsaken her temporarily for the embraces of Mademoiselle Dénuelle de la Plaigne, reader to his sister Caroline. Fidelity in such matters was certainly not one of the Emperor's characteristics. He loved change. This may have been the only reason why he broke off his intimacy with Madame Gazzani; he had simply grown weary of her! Some of the women who came into his life he treated like articles of wearing apparel. If they did not please him, or as soon as they were worn out, he threw them aside. When this happened, they must disappear out of his ken once for all. Very rarely indeed did a discarded mistress return to favour.

Madame Gazzani might well have shared the fate of Mademoiselle Lacoste and Mademoiselle Mathis, had not the good-natured Josephine come to her aid. The Empress sympathized with a cast-off mistress, for her own experience had taught her how painful it is to be scorned. Besides, just at this time the rumours concerning the possibility of a divorce were gaining ground. When, therefore, Napoleon burst into her room, one day, saying: "I don't want to see Madame Gazzani among your ladies any more. She must go back to Italy at once!" the Empress answered gently, although with a veiled reproach: "You know perfectly well, mon ami, that the best way of avoiding sight of Madame Gazzani is to leave her among

my ladies. We shall mingle our tears, for we understand one another very well." Napoleon had no answer to this, and Carlotta remained.

But Josephine was mistaken in thinking that the Genoese beauty was distressed at the breaking off of her intimacy with the Emperor. Carlotta's feeling towards Napoleon was only one of reverent devotion. For her he was the Emperor, the master who must be obeyed. She therefore quickly consoled herself among the crowd of admirers with whom a beautiful and amiable woman is sure to be surrounded. Young Count Pourtalès soon took the place that had been left vacant by Napoleon. In due course, however, he was married off to Mademoiselle de Castellane when it was thought expedient to put an end to his intimacy with the Italian.

As soon as Carlotta Gazzani had ceased to be the favourite, her salon was emptied of all the officers and diplomats, all the pretty women and the flatterers, who had formed a circle round her when the sun still shone. Naturally a few trustworthy friends remained, and the Empress Josephine was one of them. The Empress lavished favours on Carlotta. After the divorce Madame Gazzani accompanied Josephine to Malmaison and to the château of Navarre, near Evreux. With as much warrant as Bellilote in former days, Carlotta had now styled herself baroness. She was Baroness Brentano-Gazzani, and had a coat of arms more resplendent than Napoleon's own.

But the Empire was tottering. The throne which Napoleon had carved for himself with his sword out of the ruins of the revolution, collapsed in the year 1814. The Emperor had to restrict his Empire to the little island of Elba. Then there came once more days filled with jubilant prospects. Like a tempest, the news flashed across Europe that the eagle had spread his great pinions again, and had taken up his perch once more upon the throne of the Bourbons!

In the heart of Carlotta Gazzani there reawakened memories of brilliant days spent in the imperial court. Josephine had been dead for a year; Marie Louise and

her little son were far away; perhaps Napoleon needed consolation, perhaps he would now welcome the soft hand which of yore had stroked away trouble from his brow. Following the example of Madame Pellaprat,[2] Carlotta hastened from Evreux to meet the returning Emperor. But there was nothing left of her old beauty. She was now forty-four. Her face was wrinkled in a way which neither powder nor paint could disguise. But her heart was still young, and was perhaps more devoted to the Emperor than it had been ten years before.

The two met, but Napoleon took very little notice of her. He had other things than love-making to think of. France, and the throne which he hoped to reconquer, filled his mind. "A woman must be beautiful to please me"—such was his principle. The days of Carlotta Gazzani's beauty were over and done with. Still, she stayed at her sometime lover's court, until the defeat at Waterloo put a term to the splendours of Napoleon.

[2] Madame Pellaprat was the wife of Treasurer de Calvados. Napoleon had met her on his journey to Caen, and had singled her out for favour.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ELEONORE DENUELLE DE LA PLAIGNE

When Napoleon married Josephine de Beauharnais, the other members of the Bonaparte family, and especially Napoleon's sisters, conceived an inextinguishable hatred for their new relative, and were always ready to intrigue against her in a way which did them little credit. Elsie, Pauline, and Caroline did their utmost to favour their brother's love adventures, and would even throw good-looking women in his way. They hoped thereby to make a breach between him and "la vieille," and thus to bring about a speedy divorce. Murat was also in the plot, and sometimes played the rôle of postillion d'amour. When campaigning, he made it his business to provide for the Emperor's "amusements"—unless he thought he himself had a prior claim. Talleyrand was another of several go-betweens who were ready to help Napoleon in his amours. In camp at Boulogne, one day, Napoleon remarked that he was tired of looking at moustachioed faces, and on the spot Murat produced a pretty Italian woman who seemed to have been merely waiting for the Emperor to throw the handkerchief. It was the same thing in Paris. Murat almost always accompanied Napoleon upon his nocturnal drives, which were made in a carriage without armorial bearings, the Emperor wearing a plain black coat and a round hat. While Murat attended to the Emperor's private amusements away from the palace, Caroline, within the walls, was ever willing to help her brother to his wishes. Thus it was that many of her ladies, like Semele in the Old Greek myth, were enveloped in the lightnings of Jupiter.

Early in 1806, the victor of Austerlitz came back to Paris. At his sister's rooms in the Elysée palace he met a new and pretty reader, who seemed to be deliberately put in his way. Her beauty was so remarkable, and her manners were so charmingly coquettish, that she could

not fail to please him. She was still quite young, barely eighteen, having been born on September 13, 1787. She knew how to place her lithe form in the most attractive postures, how to curl her dark brown hair skilfully, and how to make great play with her large dark eyes, so that even the most blasé of men could hardly have resisted her. Now Napoleon was neither blasé nor a novice in the interpretation of this speech without words. His wooing did not tarry. He made his desires known to the lady through the instrumentality of his sister Caroline, who had with secret joy been watching her brother's interest in the young reader. Although Napoleon's sisters were often refractory to his commands, they were pliable enough when he wanted them to help him in his love affairs. In this instance, however, Caroline felt it incumbent upon her to see to it that the young lady's future should be assured, being herself in a position of trust towards the girl. But how could she provide her protégée with more splendid emoluments than by giving her to the Emperor as mistress?

Louise Cathérine Eléonore Dénuelle de la Plaigne, young though she was, had something which might be called a past. She was the daughter of a man who was presumed to be a rentier, although the sources of the income with which he supported a family having extravagant tastes were dubious. Eléonore's mother was pretty, being still comparatively young; and it was said that her beauty had contributed more than a little to the well-being of her family. Although the Dénuelles did not move in the best Parisian circles, Eléonore was for a time educated in the aristocratic school kept by Madame Campan, where Hortense, Caroline, and other young ladies who were destined in future days to wear crowns, were among the pupils. Perhaps the Dénuelles thought that at Madame Campan's, Eléonore would find a chance of making one of those advantageous marriages which were in fashion in the days of Hortense. Had not Mademoiselle Tascher de la Pagerie, and Mesdemoiselles Emilie and Stephanie de Beauharnais, Josephine's nieces, left school

in order to become the wives of princes and high dignitaries?

But Eléonore finished her career at Saint-Germain-en-Laye without having made the desired match. She was then seventeen years old, and most attractive. One evening she was with her mother in the theatre. A young and smartly dressed officer entered the box and seated himself in the empty chair behind her. Eléonore seemed to find the newcomer more interesting than the play she was supposed to be looking at. During the interval, the pair struck up an acquaintance. The young man introduced himself as Captain Jean François Honoré Revel of the Fifteenth Dragoons, and he seemed to be immensely struck by the girl's beauty. Madame Dénuelle delighted at her daughter's conquest, invited Revel to sup with them after the theatre. He paid several more visits, and soon afterwards on January 15, 1805, Eléonore and Captain Revel were married.

Mademoiselle Dénuelle had fallen into the hands of an adventurer, an unscrupulous man who hoped that a pretty wife would prove more useful to him than his profession had proved—for in truth he had no profession now. Shortly before his marriage he had, so he said, left the army in order to become an army contractor. The real fact was that he had never been a captain, and had never risen above the rank of sergeant. Two months after his marriage, in March 1805, he was arrested on a charge of embezzlement and forgery, and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Besides, he had been married before, and had two children.

Eléonore soon learned his true character, and left him. In her distress, she turned to Madame Campan for help. Since this lady felt partly responsible for the unlucky marriage (for when Revel had come to consult her about his intended marriage, she had urged on the affair), she was quite ready to do what she could to help her former pupil. It was through Madame Campan's influence that Eléonore secured an appointment in a subordinate capacity to Her Imperial Highness Princess Caroline, and soon afterwards rose to the position of reader.

She held this office when Napoleon made her acquaintance in 1806. Neither her home training nor her brief experience as Revel's wife had been morally advantageous to the young woman. When, therefore, the Emperor (who, as we know, was not a laggard in love) made his proposals through Caroline's instrumentality, Eléonore was only too delighted to visit the private apartments at the Tuileries. But her visits to the Emperor were few and brief. It was in accordance with her own taste that she should stay as short a time as possible when she came to see Napoleon, since nothing but vanity had impelled her to become the mistress of the greatest man of his day. She probably cared for him even less than Madame Gazzani had, for the Italian certainly had a slavish devotion to the Emperor.

Very soon after her first visit to the Tuileries, Eléonore found that she was with child. Princess Caroline was overjoyed to learn this news. If he were going to have a child, perhaps a son, Napoleon might at length make up his mind to divorce Josephine. Caroline was the first to bring him these joyful tidings.

Napoleon at once commissioned Duroc, the grand marshal of the palace, to provide a house for his mistress, a place where she could live as long as she was in an interesting condition. This house was in the Rue de la Victoire, which had formerly been called the Rue Chantereine. Napoleon seems to have had an especial fondness for this street as a place of residence for his lady friends. It was here that Josephine had lived in the days of his first passion for her; and at a later date Countess Walewska was quartered there likewise. As soon as Napoleon was certain that he was going to have a child by Eléonore, his visits to her became less frequent. Meanwhile she had procured a divorce from her husband and had resumed her maiden name.[1] Her worthy husband, who had resumed the career of adventurer after leaving prison, subsequently published the most scandalous

[1] The divorce was declared on April 29, 1806.

pamphlets concerning Eléonore, Napoleon, Murat, and Caroline.[2]

While the Emperor, in Posen, was cementing his alliance with Saxony, Eléonore gave birth to a boy on December 13, 1806. He was not given his father's famous name in full, but received a part of it, being called Léon.[3] His birth was registered in the following remarkable terms:

Monday, December 15, 1806, registration of the birth of:

Léon, male sex, born on the thirteenth of this month at 2 o'clock in the morning in the Rue de la Victoire, No. 29, division Mont-Blanc, son of Mademoiselle Eléonore Dénuelle, rentière, twenty years of age; father absent. As witnesses were present M. Jacques René Marie Aymé, Treasurer of the Legion of Honour, residing Rue Saint-George, No. 24, and M. Buillaume Andral, physician to the Invalides, and living there; upon the requisition of M. Pierre Marchais, accoucheur living Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, No. 29, who, with the before-named witnesses and with us, Louis Picard, assistant mayor, have compiled this birth certificate, and have signed it after reading it over.

Signed: Marchais, Aymé, Andral, and Picard.

Handed by us to the Mayor, in harmony with the original, on November 16, 1815.

Witnessed in the Secretariat. Signed: Boileau.
Signed: Mauriceau.

When the courier despatched by Princess Caroline to inform Napoleon of little Léon's birth reached the Emperor, he was at Pultusk, where six days earlier he had fought his first battle with the Russians. He was extremely delighted, and full of pride, exclaimed: "I have a son!" Now he knew that his stock was capable of reproduction. His determination to procure a divorce from Josephine was strengthened. His most ardent longing was fulfilled. A son! His son! When he got back to Paris, the child would smile at him with his little unweeping eyes, and would perhaps stretch out his arms towards his father. The thought filled him with joy. For a long

[2] The most notable of these pamphlets bears the following title: "Bonaparte et Murat, ravisseurs d'une jeune femme et quelques-uns de leurs agents complices de ce rapt, devant le tribunal de première instance du département de la Seine; mémorie historique, écrit par le mari outragé, J. H. Revel. Paris, 1815." The other pamphlets were seven in number; all of them relate to his divorce.

[3] His second name was Charles.

time, he cherished the design of adopting this illegitimate boy, who would be appointed heir to the throne. It did not trouble him that his own legal code declared that the illegitimate offspring of a ruler was incompetent to succeed. He actually talked the matter over with Josephine, for this was the best way of opening up the topic of divorce with her, but after a while he let the plan drop.

Little Léon, whose future was to be so stormy, and who, in the days of the Second Empire, was to acquire so unsavoury a reputation as Count Léon, was for the first four years of his life handed over to the care of a certain Madame Loir. She had been nurse of Princess Caroline's son, little Achille Murat. The Emperor provided for the lad's education, and, on his return from the Prussian campaign, assigned the boy an income of thirty thousand francs and the mother one of twenty-two thousand francs. But he would not have anything more to do with Eléonore. In the year 1807 she, with her child, had appeared at Fontainebleau uninvited, and had made Constant announce her to the Emperor. Napoleon was furious, and sent out a messenger to her saying that he only received persons whom he wished to see. Eléonore had to take her departure. For Napoleon, she was the mother of his son, but was no longer his beloved. She had fulfilled her duty in bearing him this son, upon whom all his interest was concentrated, while the mother was a matter of indifference to him. He never saw her again. He considered that he had discharged his obligations towards her by providing her with the house in the Rue de la Victoire and by supplying her with a pension.

But it was otherwise as far as the boy was concerned. When Léon was three years old, he often had the child brought to the Tuileries—even at a later date, after the marriage to Marie Louise. Napoleon played with little Léon, teased him, kissed him, and was delighted with the youngster's ready answers. Léon never went away from the Tuileries without being loaded with presents of various kinds, sweets, and above all with bank-notes which came in very usefully for his mother.

As guardian, Napoleon appointed Baron Ignace

Mathieu de Mauviéres, father-in-law of his secretary, Baron Méneval. In company of Mauviéres's sons, in the year 1812, Léon was sent to Hix School in Paris; and when the Emperor came back from Elba, Madame Mère and Cardinal Fesch, the Emperor's uncle, took over the child's education. They were both much attached to him, although Léon had a domineering, wild, and unruly disposition. Letizia was especially fond of him, for he reminded her of her own little Napoleon, whom he closely resembled.

The Emperor's idea was to make something great out of his son, who was his own flesh and blood. Léon was not to be a commonplace man! Even when Napoleon had had a legitimate son for a long while, and was devoted to this heir, he did not lose interest in the illegitimate boy, and continued to take great care of the latter. Before departing on the campaign of 1814, he supplemented Léon's allowance by a further annual sum of twelve thousand francs, so that the lad's future might be assured should he himself be killed in action. In June 1815, he presented the boy with ten canal shares worth one hundred thousand francs, and gave little Léon a last kiss on his innocent brow. The Emperor had not the gratification of thus bidding farewell to his legitimate offspring, who was now far away from France, bereft of father and prospect of succession to the throne! Nor did Napoleon forget Léon in his testament, penned when his natural son was fifteen years old. His bequest was a pension of seventy-two thousand francs, Napoleon adding that he would be glad if Léon were to enter the civil service. The dying Emperor had no inkling of the way in which his hopes for Léon were to be frustrated.

What had become of Léon's mother meanwhile? On February 4, 1808, about one year after the child's birth, she had married an infantry lieutenant named Pierre Philippe Augier, had accompanied him to Spain, and been widowed in the year 1812. Augier, who had meanwhile obtained the rank of captain, died in the hospital at Marienburg during the retreat from Russia. Two years

later, when the allies invaded France, she made the acquaintance of a Bavarian major, Count Carl August Emil Luxburg, and married him at Seckenheim in Baden on May 25, 1814. She lived with him in Germany and elsewhere for twenty-six years, and then returned with him to Paris, for he had been appointed Badenese envoy. Like all the Emperor's mistresses, Eléonore saw the ruin of the Napoleonic empire; and, like one or two of the others, she saw the Second Empire in the days of its glory. She died in Paris on January 30, 1868.

Count Léon, as soon as he reached an age at which the doors of society, the doors of the world and the half-world were open to him, led the most profligate and extravagant life. He was a handsome fellow, tall and slender like his mother, but in other respects the living image of his father. He had Napoleon's delicately chiselled mouth, bold aquiline nose, and resolute eyes. But Léon was a dandy, an idler, an inveterate gambler—what in modern slang would be called a hopeless rotter. His heritage was disastrous to him. The activity, the verve, the energy, inherited from his father (for the young count, idler though he was, had all these qualities), his courage and resoluteness, were directed by him into the wrong channels. Being the son of a great man, he believed himself entitled to play a leading part in the world without having done anything to deserve this exceptional position. Brought up in luxury, spoiled and admired from early childhood, all that was best in him had been corrupted before he reached man's estate. He did not know the value of money. It was nothing to him so long as he could lavish it freely; and it always slipped through his fingers. In one night's gaming he got rid of forty-five thousand francs; and another night his losses were sixteen thousand francs. His resources, though large, were quite inadequate for his dissipated life, which was chiefly spent behind the scenes at the theatre and in the boudoirs of light women. He was continually pestering the members of the imperial family with demands for money; and in the actions he was perpetually bringing

against all and sundry, and even against his own mother, he displayed a misguided genius. At length, in the year 1838, he found his way into the debtor's prison at Clichy, where he spent two years.

This unpleasant experience did not teach Léon to manage his affairs any better. As before, he spent much of his time in the company of women with the shadiest reputations; and he was engaged in all kinds of dubious enterprises, so that he became well known to the Parisian police. In the year 1840, when in London, he wished to pay a visit to Prince Louis, afterwards Emperor Napoleon III, whom he addressed as "cousin." Since Louis Bonaparte refused to receive him, Léon sent his cousin a challenge. The duel was to be with pistols, at Wimbledon, but the English police put a stop to it. Completely ruined both monetarily and morally, after his return to France he brought an action against his mother Countess Luxburg, who was in easy circumstances, and success in this affair provided him with an allowance of four thousand francs a year. Later, when Louis Bonaparte had become Emperor, the latter paid Léon the sum bequeathed to him by Napoleon I, amounting to two hundred twenty-five thousand, three hundred and nineteen francs; and Napoleon III, out of his privy purse added an income of six thousand francs. The only gratitude Napoleon III received for these benefactions consisted of scandalous invectives in pamphlets published by his amiable cousin Léon. But the long-suffering Louis Bonaparte paid Léon's debts more than once after this, disbursing for the purpose sixty thousand francs. The sums named were large for those days, but they were nothing to Count Léon. Ere long he had not a centime left, and once more besieged his "relatives" with requests for further assistance. On one occasion he asked for five hundred thousand francs, on another for eight hundred seventy-seven thousand, six hundred seventy—and so on.

After the fall of the Second Empire, Léon lived in England, it may be presumed still at the expense of the family of Napoleon III, now in exile there. For some

years he had been living with a seamstress, Françoise Fanny Jonet, who had borne him four children.[4]

In the year 1875, he returned to France, visiting Toulouse, Bordeaux, Tours, and ultimately settling down in Pontoise, where he was so utterly destitute that he had not even a few halfpence to spend on tobacco, and had to pawn his pocketknife in order to get a supply of the weed. His wife, Countess Léon, had to work as charwoman to earn a subsistence. Léon scraped together money whenever and wherever he could, not scrupling towards the end to waylay his acquaintances in the street and ask for the loan of a few francs. No one would give him any credit. Madame Léon's most ardent wish was to keep a tobacconist's shop, but she died in the year 1899 with this longing unfulfilled. The Count had ended his career eighteen years earlier. The son of the great Emperor, a man who had seen the days of glory and power, and who had himself lived in luxury, died in utter penury on April 15, 1881, not leaving enough behind to pay for a deal coffin. This was a striking epilogue to the love adventures of the first Emperor of the French.

[4] The liaison was entered into during the year 1854; in 1862, for the sake of the children, Léon married Françoise.

THE BELOVED

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

COUNTESS MARIE WALEWSKA

Who speaks the name of this young Polish noblewoman without compassion, when it is coupled with that of Napoleon? Even today Countess Walewska is looked upon as a sacrifice to the Minotaur, who is supposed to have ruthlessly seized his prey, and to have enforced his will upon her notwithstanding her desperate resistance and despite all her tears. Madame de Rémusat's memoirs are chiefly responsible for the widely diffused opinion, for she was the first to spread the story that Napoleon had made Murat bring him this mistress chosen from among the Polish noblewomen, and that he had unceremoniously invited her to share his supper and his bed. This is either calumny or legend—no matter which.

Close investigation shows that the Emperor's acquaintanceship with the young woman (the only one besides Joséphine for whom he had a lasting passion) was formed, if not in a perfectly ideal manner, at any rate in a much less brutal way than Madame de Rémusat would have us believe. Napoleon's feeling for Walewska was one of a kind which he had not experienced for any woman before her, and never experienced for any woman after her. For the first time he met a woman who felt just as he did, who unselfishly reciprocated his tenderness, who was wholly devoted to him and lived for him alone. This passion, this love, which knew neither bounds nor obstacles, was no doubt to a large extent brought to a close by the Emperor's marriage to Marie Louise, but it was not wholly terminated even by this.

We should, of course be wrong to surround the beginnings of the liaison with a halo of sentimentality. Enthusiastic sensibilities were foreign to Napoleon's temperament. He looked on a woman; she pleased him; he wanted to possess her. His first feeling was sensual. If, in the woman he had chosen. he subsequently discovered

spiritual qualities which were congenial to him, then his own heart responded. But the first thing he wanted was to possess the woman's body. The ideal elements of love, its sentimental aspects such as the northerner wants to find even in the most trivial amourette, were in the early stages thrust aside by Napoleon, through whose veins flowed the hot blood of his Corsican ancestors. Often enough, such ideal elements never entered into the case at all. Idealized love was known to Napoleon only in youth, when he was still a reader of Rousseau's romances, when his knowledge of women was still purely platonic, and when for the first time he really loved. Even then, his sentiments were intimately connected with a passionate sensuality.

As he grew older, in this man in whose nature such striking contrasts were intermingled, the crudely sexual advanced more and more into the foreground. We have good reason to suppose that outward circumstances, the peculiar position he came to occupy, must have contributed to the predominance of the sensual in his affections. The most beautiful women were ready to throw themselves into the arms of the ruler whose fame and power extended over half the world. He took them when they offered themselves. Were they looking in him for the soul?

Now let us go back to those days of the Polish campaign. Napoleon was at the climax of his power. He was doing everything he could to stimulate the fighting spirit of the Poles; was giving them banquets, balls, and concerts; was making them far-reaching promises; and was arousing in them the most delightful hopes that the independence of their country would be restored. They naturally regarded him if not as a god at least as a demigod! It seemed to them that providence had sent him to them for the sole purpose of restoring the ancient glories of Poland. In their eyes his marshals and generals were the most wonderful warriors of history. With the help of these paladins, the Emperor of the French would free the Poles from slavery which seemed to them more grievous than that which any other nation before them had had to endure. He would make them once more the proud people

they had been under their last kings. Anyone who knows the Poles, knows how passionate is their craving to be an independent nation!

Loud, therefore, was the rejoicing and intense the pleasure, when Napoleon, in the year 1807, set up his headquarters in the palace at Warsaw. His officers and men took the hearts of the Polish beauties by storm. Was he, their general, their emperor, to be the only man shut out from such triumphs which, though not military, were none the less glorious? "All these Polish women are French women," he had written to Josephine from Posen on December 2nd. It was natural that the pure-blooded Polish women in Warsaw should make a still greater impression on him. None the less he had to use all his talents as a conqueror to win the heart of a young Polish woman who was proud, unspoiled, and not really antagonistic to him.

The first time Napoleon set eyes on Countess Walewska was at a dance given by the town of Warsaw, given in the Emperor's honour. She was eighteen years old, a blond, and delicately beautiful. Her gentle blue eyes reminded him of those days in Egypt when he had first met his first mistress, who was likewise fair-haired, young, and blooming. But this Polish beauty was a nobler flower than Bellilote, the cook's daughter. The Countess belonged to the old but impoverished family of Laczinski. She was married to a wealthy septuagenarian, Count Anastasius Colonna-Walewicz-Walewski, famous for the strictness of his principles and for the cold aridity of his disposition. Marie Laczinski was his third wife, and nearly ten years younger than his youngest grandchild. From their estate of Walewicz, where she lived with her husband in strict retirement, they had come to Warsaw in order to admire the hero into whose hands the Poles wished to entrust their destinies.

This young and lovely countess, who barely seemed a grown woman, was extraordinarily charming. She could laugh most winningly; her violet eyes were gentle and innocent; her flower-like face conveyed an impression of tender melancholy which made her all the more attrac-

tive. Her slight but well-shaped figure was clad in white satin covered with white tulle, and her golden hair was simply adorned by a garland of flowers. Among the begemmed ladies in the gathering, she seemed modesty personified.

None the less Napoleon did not fail to notice Marie Walewska's beauty. She appeared to him the acme of grace and gentleness, and the desire grew in him to make this delicate blossom his own. It never occurred to him that he would encounter any difficulties. No woman had ever opposed his wishes, the Emperor's wishes. He knew that the Polish women more than others admired him, and that they regarded him as the man destined to restore the kingdom of Poland.

When Talleyrand declaimed the magical word "The Emperor!" in order to announce Napoleon's entrance into the ballroom, the faces of the pretty Polish women there assembled became lively with expectation. The doors were flung open, and the Emperor of the French stood before the representatives of the Polish nobility. For a minute his eagle eye roamed over the brilliant company, and then he began his round.

In many of the women present there now flamed up enthusiastic admiration for the man in whose power it was to make the Polish nation happy once more. Countess Anna Potocka, née Countess Tyszkiewicz, thus describes the feelings with which she first looked upon Napoleon: "It would be difficult to understand how powerful an impression he aroused. For my own part, I was, as it were, stupefied, filled with a dumb suprise, such as that which may be experienced at sight of a miracle. It seemed to me as if there were a halo round his head. My only thought, as soon as I could think, as soon as I had recovered from my first astonishment, was that such a being must be immortal, that it was impossible for so mighty a spirit, so great a genius, ever to cease to be! In my innermost self I ascribed to him a twofold immortality." When Napoleon spoke to her, she was so much confused that she did not remember a word he had said to her. But she never forgot his smile. "This

NAPOLEON
After a painting by Arnold

smile, one that was peculiar to him when he spoke to a woman, took from his face all the severity which his penetrating glance usually gave to it."

What was going on in Countess Potocka's inmost self was reflected in the hearts of many of the Polish ladies. Not a few of them, no doubt, would have been ready, like Monna Vanna, to give themselves to the commander who held the fate of their country in his hands. But in this case the commander was not the enemy, and he inspired admiration instead of terror.

Maybe Napoleon, when his eyes lighted on Countess Walewska, thought, like Uriel Acosta, that "in a woman, admiration and love are one." Certainly he knew that she was one of the most ardent among Polish patriots; he knew that she admired his genius, his fame, and his greatness; and he knew that she was wedded to an old man. He did not think she could be happy in her marriage; the melancholy written on her charming face confirmed him in his opinion and increased his passion.

This first evening, Napoleon said only a word or two to Marie Walewska, although he danced a contra-dance with her. After his usual manner, he asked her name, her family name, who her husband was, and so on; concluding with an observation concerning her dress. He said that white tulle did not look well on white satin. Marie answered his questions with inimitable grace, but with natural shyness, which delighted the Emperor. Her little head, which reminded him of a Greuze, seemed to him most alluring in its innocent beauty. While he was talking with the ministers of State about politics and affairs, his thoughts continually turned to her. He saw none but her; he heard nothing but her gentle voice, her foreign French, and her discreet and tuneful laughter.

Next morning Napoleon was strangely excited. His valet had great difficulty in dressing him, for the Emperor would not stand or sit quiet for a moment. He strode up and down the room, went to the table and fluttered his newspapers inattentively, moved now here and now there without knowing what he was doing. At length he could no longer endure his uncertainty. After break-

fast he ordered the faithful Duroc to bear his homage to the Countess and to lay his wishes at her feet. "I had eyes only for you, and longed to be with you alone," he wrote her. "Send me an answer quickly, in order that the fire which is consuming me may be appeased. N."

So explicit a declaration was naturally alarming to the young woman, who was not used to love-avowals of this kind. Her modesty was deeply wounded. Consequently, the grand marshal of the palace secured anything but a civil reception, and, to his great astonishment, he had to return without having been able to settle matters. This was his first experience of the kind. Never before had any woman to whom the Emperor had thrown the handkerchief refused to comply with the great man's wishes. But this little Polish lady was of a very different kind from Napoleon's previous acquaintances among the fair sex—as remote from them as sky from earth. At a later date, speaking of her, Napoleon said to his brother Lucien: "She was a charming woman, an angel. There can be no doubt that her soul was as lovely as her face."

Notwithstanding the rebuff, he did not abandon hope. Although never since he became Emperor had he written any love letters, he now sent to Countess Walewska an epistle which was not, indeed, filled with all the tenderness of his former love letters to Josephine, but was still worthy of an Emperor, a Napoleon.

"Have I displeased you? I hoped the opposite. Or has your first feeling vanished? My passion grows. You rob me of my rest. Vouchsafe a little joy, a little happiness, to the poor heart that would fain worship you! Is it so hard to give me an answer? You now owe me two."

This letter, likewise, remained unanswered, though not unread. Not until he sent a third letter did he attain his end. Napoleon begged, besought, the favour of this young woman; and at length he let fall the magic word "country." "There are moments when high position is a heavy burden. That is borne in on me at this moment. How can a loving heart which would fain throw itself at your feet, but is restrained from accomplishing its dearest wishes by a lofty wall of circumstances, find

peace? If only you would! . . . None but you can overcome the obstacles which separate us. My friend Duroc will do what he can to make it easy for you. Oh, come, come! All your wishes shall be fulfilled! Your country will be even dearer to me, if you have compassion on my heart. N."

There it was, plainly written! He would do anything for her country! As if in a dream, Marie Walewska listened to the counsels of her friends and acquaintances. They all advised her not to repel the advances of the Emperor of the French, but to seize the chance of doing good to her country. They reminded her of Madame de Vauban, beloved of Prince Josef Poniatowski, who at the court of Louis XVI had studied the love-making of princes. Among her advisers was the ardent patriot Madame Abramowicz; and there was her own brother, Count Laczinski. One and all urged her to take this step for the sake of her country. Madame Abramowicz read aloud to her a letter sent by the most noted Polish noblemen and patriots. Among other things, these worthies wrote: "Do you think that Esther gave herself to Ahasuerus for love's sake? Did she not shudder when he looked at her? Did she not fall into a swoon? Does not this prove that on her side affection had no part in the union? She sacrificed herself to save her nation, and win fame as its saviour!"

At length, therefore, the Countess made up her mind to comply with the wishes of the man of might. She went! Two conflicting sentiments were at war within her breast. One of these was love of country, which said: "You must make the sacrifice! It is your duty to the oppressed Polish nation! Upon you it depends that Poland shall again be great and independent!" In the opposite sense spoke her piety, her religious principles, which forbade her to commit adultery, even though she was unhappy in her marriage. But she had no dislike of Napoleon. He was a hero whom she admired; and what we admire, we do not loathe. Had she been free, it is likely enough that she would have made less resistance. But she was not free. She had a son whom she loved, a husband, and a family.

She had never given any of them cause to complain of her moral conduct. To her womanly delicacy, moreover, it was repugnant that she should surrender without a struggle. To overcome all these difficulties caused Marie Walewska many painful hours. At length patriotism got the upper hand, and she promised to go.

Napoleon awaited her with intense excitement. But even now, he was not to win the game so easily. Marie arrived between ten and eleven in the evening, in a terribly overwrought state. She wept bitterly on account of the step she was about to take. Duroc, who brought her in a closed carriage, had almost to carry her up the stairs, for her knees were trembling violently. When at length she stood in the Emperor's room, face to face with Napoleon; when he looked at her with that penetrating glance which seemed to command, and yet was now so soft and gentle—although Madame Walewska did not swoon like Esther, she continued to weep bitterly. He led her to a chair, and let her cry her heart out. How, at such a moment could he have been brutal towards her? What did he feel for her but sympathy? Before him was a woman who seemed almost chaste. Marie was so very different from Eléonore Dénuelle, from Madame Duchâtel, from Giuseppina Grassini, and many another woman he had known. He sought and found the tone which would enable him to win Marie Walewska's confidence. He realized that Jupiter's smile was out of place when a woman was shedding tears. He consoled her, asked her to tell him the story of her marriage, and thus the hours passed away while the two exchanged assurances and protestations. Amid her tears, the Countess again and again insisted that she had come to the Emperor only in the firm conviction that he would fulfil his pledge to restore the freedom of Poland. When she left him towards two in the morning, she was still weeping.

Napoleon had not been repelled by her tears and lamentations. He seems really to have felt profound sympathy for this young woman, and he now desired to win, not her body merely, but also her mind. When she went away, he made her promise that this visit should not be

the last. Early next morning he sent her a letter, accompanied by flowers and costly trinkets. His words conveyed all his love and all his passion:

"Marie, sweet Marie, my first thought is yours. My first wish is to see you again. You will come again, won't you? You promised. If you do not come, the eagle will fly to you. I shall see you at dinner. I pledge you my word. Please wear the nosegay that I send; it will be a secret messenger of our feelings amid the crowd; . . . thus we shall understand one another. If I lay my hand on my heart, you will know that it is wholly yours; for answer, press your flowers to your bosom. Love me, my charming Marie; do not take your hand away from the flowers!"

He wrote with all the passion of a youth of twenty. This man of many campaigns and many battles, this war-worn soldier, had not forgotten the eternally new language of love, nor the symbolism used by lovers. Marie received the letter, but would not accept the diamonds. Even the flowers did not find favour in her eyes. She appeared at the dinner that evening without wearing "the secret messenger" of the Emperor's feelings. What had really made an impression on her were his loving words. Three days later she visited him again. This time she did not weep. Her eyes certainly bore the traces of recent tears, but they were dried now, though an indescribable melancholy marked her gentle face. Yet her resistance was at an end, as soon as she was alone with Napoleon.

Marie Walewska stayed with the Emperor until early in the morning. She was conquered! She had been conquered by his promise that he would re-establish the kingdom of Poland; conquered by his winning and considerate ways, and by his honest affection for her. Thenceforward her nocturnal visits to him were frequent, and were continued until the Russians called her lover into the field. But Napoleon was not content with her spending almost every evening in his company. In addition she must be present at every dance, every concert, and every other festivity which he honoured with

his presence. He needed to see her continually. He spoke to her on these occasions in the language of the eyes and the heart, which she now understood perfectly, and in which she answered him. It was always the same words that he wished to say to Marie. Every glance and every gesture meant: "I love you. I think only of you, and am never weary of telling you so!"

In Mainz, meanwhile, Josephine was impatiently awaiting her husband's leave to visit Warsaw. He used skilful phrases to mask his refusal, telling her how bad the roads were, how inhospitable the season, how many other disagreeables she would encounter. Besides, he did not stay much longer in Warsaw. The murderous battle of Eylau, in which so many thousands met their deaths without any decisive issue, was close at hand. When it was over Napoleon removed his headquarters to Osterode.

Amid the masses of killed and wounded, amid his boundless suffering by which he was surrounded, his thoughts turned to love, to Marie, to her flower-like beauty. As he at one time had wanted Josephine, so now he wanted this new beloved to be near him even when the bullets were flying round his head. But Osterode, which had been devastated by the war, was little fitted for the reception of his mistress. Napoleon was delighted, therefore, when, in the beginning of April, he was able to establish his headquarters at the splendid castle of Finckenstein in West Prussia. It belonged to Burgrave Friederich Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten, who was then with the King of Prussia at Memel.[1] In this luxuriously furnished castle, the Emperor of the French occupied the so-called royal room, which he believed to be the one where Frederick the Great had once taken up his quarters. A man very sensitive to cold, Napoleon was greatly pleased that there were so many fireplaces and stoves in the four rooms he used. Writing to Josephine on April 2, 1807, he said: "I have established my headquarters in a very fine castle, something like Bessières's.

[1] Finckenstein now belongs to Burgrave and Count Georg zu Dohna-Finckenstein.

I have a great many fireplaces, which is very pleasant, for I do like to see a fire when I get up at night." A few days later, on the 6th, he wrote: "I am in a fine castle, where there are a great many fireplaces. That is very pleasant. The weather is extremely cold here, and everything is frozen." In letters to others, as to Talleyrand and Cambacérès, he expressed himself as delighted with these comfortable quarters.

But Napoleon did not stay long alone at Finckenstein. In the end of April or the beginning of May, Countess Walewska came there by night, accompanied by her brother, and taking the greatest precautions to avoid publicity. She stayed with Napoleon for three weeks, and the two were as much in love with one another as ever. The Emperor's bedroom contained a huge four-poster, with heavy curtains of wine-coloured damask and white silk.[2] Hard by his own room, he had an apartment with a dressing-room arranged for Marie, and she never left these quarters by daylight. When she wanted fresh air, she must take her walks abroad under cover of night. None of the servants at Finckenstein, none of the dwellers in the village, and none of the Emperor's suite, ever saw the Countess. Even Berthier caught sight of her once only, by chance, when she left Napoleon's room after breakfasting with him. The lovers took all their meals together, this being a privilege which Josephine had never enjoyed. At table they were served only by Constant, who sings the young woman's praises, describing her as of a charming unselfish disposition. She seemed deeply in love with the Emperor, and at a later date she once said to the faithful valet: "All my thoughts come from him and go back to him. He is my all, my future, and my life!"

Napoleon found great happiness in this love. Marie's modesty, her gentleness, and her amiability, won more and more influence over him day by day. She was the woman of whom he had always dreamed, the gentle companion whose only wish it was to make his private life as happy as possible. During the long hours in which her

[2] Napoleon never slept in this huge bed, but had his camp bed set up beside it.

lover was otherwise engaged, she stayed alone in her room doing needlework or reading. From time to time she would peep from behind the curtains into the courtyard where the Emperor was reviewing his guards. Then her heart was filled with pride that she belonged to this man among men, this man upon whom all those weather-beaten faces beamed, the men to whom they all shouted "Vive l'Empereur!" when the "little corporal" strode in front of their ranks.

The reason why Marie Walewska's visit to Finckenstein was wrapped in so much secrecy was that Josephine was not to learn the truth of what she had long suspected. In one of her letters she had allowed her jealousy to find vent, complaining that Napoleon was corresponding with ladies. On May 10th, he wrote to her in answer:

"I do not know what you are talking about when you say that I am corresponding with ladies. I love only one woman in the world, my little, good, sulky, and capricious Josephine, who can quarrel no less gracefully than she does everything else. For she is always loveable—except when she is jealous. Then she is a little devil!

"But let us come back to those ladies of yours. If I were really interested in any one of them, she would have to be as lovely and fresh as a rosebud!"

The hypocrite! With his "rosebud" he was making a half-confession, a veiled allusion to his young mistress with whom he was passing the days so pleasantly in the castle of Finckenstein! The idyll did not come to an end until Napoleon had to take the field once more against the Russians and the Prussians, to inflict a final defeat on them at Friedland. Then he made his way to Tilsit, where he met Queen Louise of Prussia, and at last went back to France without having fulfilled Countess Walewska's wish that he should re-establish the kingdom of Poland!

Some people say that she was profoundly mortified by this failure, and that she therefore refused to follow her lover to Paris, much though he wished her to do so. Did she really know so little of the man to whom she had given everything, the man with whom she had lived for weeks in the closest companionship? Are we to believe that she

did not know how impossible it was for him to fulfil such a desire? Surely Napoleon must have discussed the matter with her? Surely he must have told her that his policy was not to be regulated by the whims of a woman with whom he was in love? Long since, Marie had been bound to her lover, not by patriotism, but by personal inclination; and the thought of her country had come to have very little to do with her love for Napoleon. Had she been really mortified, the feeling would have lasted a long time; but we find that in the beginning of 1808 Marie Walewska joined him in the French capital. Napoleon had installed a nest for her in the Rue de la Victoire, No. 48; and he often visited her there. Duroc, the grand marshal of the palace, arranged matters in this case, just as he had done in the case of Eléonore.

In Paris, Marie led a retired life, as in Warsaw and in Finckenstein. She was not to be seen at dances, in theatres, or in concert halls. She never left her house except to visit the private apartments in the Tuileries. This was usually after nightfall. A great many of those about the court were quite unaware, at this time, that the Emperor had a new mistress in Paris. None the less, a box was always reserved for Countess Walewska in the opera and in the theatres. None the less, day after day, Dr. Corvisart, Napoleon's body physician reported to the Emperor as to the state of Marie's health. Duroc was commissioned to look after her welfare, to fulfil all her wishes, and to see that she lacked nothing. But Marie did not try to turn her position to account. Out of regard for Josephine, she was careful that her liaison with the Emperor should attract no attention—a difficult matter to ensure at a court where gossip was rife. But her life was so simple and unpretentious that it did not arouse anyone's interest. It belonged wholly to her lover, to whom she was faithful and devoted. She was no pleasure-seeker; and Paris, the city of pleasure, did not teach her new ways. It was only in her dress that the Countess permitted herself a little luxury. This is shown by her bills at the famous Leroy's. They are quite as large as even Josephine's. Napoleon liked a woman to adorn her-

self for him; and to Marie Walewska, Napoleon's wishes were law.

Her husband no longer made any claims on her. She and Count Walewski had separated when the liaison with Napoleon began, and matters seem to have been arranged in friendly fashion, for the Walewski family remained on excellent terms with the young wife. Her husband's sisters, Princess Jablonowska and Princess Birginska, were her constant companions in Paris. But she had no need of chaperones, for her character was sufficient guarantee that she would run no danger of succumbing to the temptations of the City of Light.

When the war with Austria broke out, the Countess followed her lover to Schönbrunn. The victor of Eggmühl and Ebelsberg had entered Vienna; the fate of the house of Habsburg was in his hands. The battle of Wagram decided that fate. Hardly was the thunder of the guns stilled, hardly had the smoke lifted from the battlefield, when his thoughts turned to Marie. She joined him in the middle of July. Her secret bower had long since been made ready. In one of the suburbs of Vienna, not far from Schönbrunn, he had rented a house for her, and there, when she at length arrived, a closed carriage was waiting every evening to drive the Countess to the castle. Constant always accompanied her on these occasions. The trusty servant led his master's belovèd through a private door into the very rooms in the castle where Napoleon's own son was in later years to spend his brief youth, dreaming of the deeds and the fame of his father—and in the end to die there prematurely.

The roads round Schönbrunn were ill-made and rough. Constant can hardly find words to describe how anxious Napoleon was about Marie's safety. "Do take care, Constant," the Emperor would say every night when the valet set out: "do take care that you don't have an upset. Are you sure that the coachman is a good driver? Is the carriage all right?" One night there actually was an upset. But Countess Marie was not hurt, for Constant's body broke her fall, and she was uninjured when she reached her lover's rooms. Napoleon overwhelmed her

with kisses and tenderness, as if she had been saved from some terrible danger. The cup of his happiness at Schönbrunn was filled when Marie told him that she expected to become a mother. Thenceforward he lavished love and attention on her, cared for her even more passionately than before.

In the middle of October, the hour of parting struck. When peace had been signed, Napoleon went back to Paris, and Marie set out for Poland. In the castle of Walewicz on May 4, 1810, she gave birth to the Emperor's son, who received the names of Florian Alexandre Joseph. Everyone knows that this son was a contrast to his half-brother Léon and played an important part in the days of the Second Empire.[3]

A few months after the child's birth, Marie Walewska hastened back to Paris to be near her lover once more. But during her absence there had been great changes in the imperial city. A new empress, a young woman, now shared Napoleon's throne, and was about to give the country the long-desired heir. Marie Louise filled the Emperor's thoughts He had little attention left to spare for his mistress. She brought him his son, the child of the conqueror of Wagram! Napoleon kissed the boy as tenderly as of old he had kissed the mother, and did not hesitate to appoint him an "imperial count." But Walewska's visits to the Tuileries were not renewed. The Austrian archduchess had made her entry there, and Napoleon regarded it as a sacred duty to remain faithful to this chaste wife of his, the mother of his legitimate son, the founder of his dynasty. Marie Walewksa, therefore, like Josephine, had to content herself with the friendship of the man whom she continued to love. In the days of their greatest happiness, she had given him a narrow gold ring, in which was engraved the posy: "When you cease to love me, do not forget that I love you!"

Napoleon never did forget. Perhaps, for his part, he had never ceased to love her, for in Marie Louise he did not love the woman but the daughter of an imperial line.

[3] He died in Strasburg on September 28, 1868, having been Minister for Foreign Affairs under Napoleon III.

He continued, therefore, to take the greatest care of Marie Walewska. Duroc was again commissioned to do anything she wanted. No. 3 Rue de Montmorency, Boulogne-sur-Seine, a house with a fine garden, was rented for her—a house which still stands, though it is now No. 7. A monthly allowance of ten thousand francs was made to Marie from the imperial privy purse. Little Alexandre was not, like Léon, entrusted to strangers for his education, since Napoleon knew that this mother would bring up her son better than anyone else could; but Cambacérès, the arch-chancellor, was appointed the lad's guardian. Marie often brought her little son to see his father in the Tuileries, and also took Alexandre to Malmaison to see the forsaken Josephine, who loaded both mother and child with gifts and kindness. Like Léon, Alexandre was his father's image. In June 1812, Napoleon, while staying in Königsberg, gave his son a majorat in the neighbourhood of Naples—properties bringing in an annual income of about one hundred seventy thousand francs. The usufruct of this majorat was assigned to the mother during the boy's minority, without any stipulation that she was to account for her expenditure. At the age of twenty-one, the young man was to enter into full possession of the majorat, and thenceforward was to pay his mother an annual income of fifty thousand francs. Thus did the Emperor provide simultaneously for the future of his son and for that of his belovèd.

At the beginning of the war with Russia, Marie went to Warsaw, ostensibly to settle some family affairs, but really in the hope that she would be summoned to the military headquarters. Her expectations were disappointed. Even when away from Marie Louise, Napoleon remained true to his principles. As if in compensation for this, the imperial envoy in Warsaw, Abbé de Pradt, was told to show Countess Walewska such attention as would have been proper for a legitimate princess or any official favourite. But to be singled out in this way was not agreeable to Madame Walewska, whose delicacy was wounded by the display. She hastened, therefore, to quit Warsaw.

Napoleon was grateful to her for her good taste. On his retreat from Russia he was inclined, for a moment, to visit her at Walewicz, where she was dreaming of the happy days of her love for the Emperor. When he was passing through the village of Lowicz in the district of Rawa, he proposed to make a detour for this purpose. Caulaincourt, his companion on the flight, had to use his utmost powers of persuasion to prevent the Emperor's taking so dangerous a step—dangerous because the whole neighbourhood was swarming with Cossacks. Napoleon did not abandon his design until Caulaincourt pointed out that Marie Louise would take it very much amiss if she came to hear of it.

Marie Walewska remained a true friend to Napoleon. Like a good angel, she would fain have been near him in all his misfortunes. To the last, she was an unpretentious and unselfish woman who continued to love her friend in his fall, when nothing of his greatness remained but the memory of it. When his star paled, when all forsook him, she was still near him. For her he remained the man whom she loved, to whom she had given everything, to whom she had consecrated her whole life, and who perhaps needed her in this dark hour. In April 1814, she spent the whole night in his anteroom, hoping that he would summon her, that he might find consolation in her arms. But Napoleon was in one of those crises in which, weary of life, he felt apathetic to all around him. He was lying sleepless on his bed, plunged in melancholy, and gave no thought to the woman who was waiting close at hand for a farewell glance. At length, when the grey dawn of April 13th came, Marie took her departure without having seen her lover again.

Soon afterwards, the Emperor remembered that Marie had come to see him. He sent for her, but it was too late. When he was told that she had left Fontainebleau sorrowful, he was extremely distressed that he had not seen her. "She must have felt humiliated, poor woman," he said to Constant. "Tell her when you see her how sorry I am. But I had so many things here!" He laid his hand on his forehead.

Since she had not been able to say farewell to him face to face, she wrote him. On the fifteenth, her letter reached the Emperor, and he answered her on the sixteenth as follows:

"Marie, I have received your letter of the fifteenth. The feelings which animate you touch me profoundly. They are worthy of your lovely soul and the goodness of your heart. When you have settled your affairs, and when you go to the spas of Lucca or Pisa, it will give me great pleasure to see you and your son again, since my feelings towards him remain unalterable. Keep well, do not distress yourself. Think affectionately of me. Do not doubt me. N."

Did she doubt his affection? No, for, when in Elba he was vainly expecting his lawful wife, it was Marie Walewska, and not Marie Louise, who brought him consolation for a time. She came there one day with her son, designing to gladden the heart of the banished Emperor, to help him bear his lot, and to talk with him of his past happiness and fame and glory. She was ready to share his exile. But Napoleon would not hear of this, for he was afraid of affronting Marie Louise's delicacy. Above all, he hoped for the coming of his wife.

On September 1, 1814, from the hill of Pomonte he watched the sea attentively through a telescope. At length a Neapolitan boat appeared in the offing. Returning to the Hermitage, he gave orders that a carriage with four horses, and three saddle horses, should be sent to wait at Porto Ferrajo. Towards ten in the evening, the Neapolitan ship arrived, and the expected passengers, three ladies and a little boy, landed. Bertrand received them with all possible respect. The ladies were Countess Walewska, her sister, and a companion. The little boy was Alexandre. Two of the ladies and the child got into the carriage, the third of the women mounted a horse, and then they all set out towards Marciana, where Napoleon had taken refuge from the heat among the cool chestnut groves. On the way, the travellers met the Emperor, who was riding a white horse and was attended by a train of lancers and Mamelukes. Dismounting, he got into the

carriage beside the blond lady, and gave orders to drive on. But in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Procchia, where the roads were very bad, they all had to get out of the carriage and mount the saddle horses. Napoleon conducted his guests to a tent which had been erected among the chestnut groves, not far from the Hermitage, since the accommodation in the house was scanty.

The blond lady immediately sought seclusion in one of the tents, and did not leave its shelter until the time came for her departure from the island. The Emperor only emerged from this tent now and then, to issue orders. But the little boy, who was wearing the Polish national costume, sometimes walked in the open under the chestnut trees with one of the gentlemen of the suite. Then the guests sailed away from Porto Longone under cover of night, departing as secretly as they had come.[4]

Although there was a south-westerly gale blowing, the Countess had insisted on leaving. The Emperor was extremely anxious about her. When he saw that the wind was still rising, he sent his orderly Pérèz to prevent Madame Walewska from running the hazard of the elements; but Pérèz was too late, for the Neapolitan vessel had already weighed anchor. For the whole day that followed, Napoleon was in a state of the greatest possible anxiety, and his fears were not quieted until he heard that Countess Marie had reached harbour in safety.

The Elbanese, who knew nothing of the existence of Countess Walewska, were convinced that these mysterious guests of their Emperor must have been Marie Louise and the King of Rome. The opinion was confirmed by the fact that, shortly before the visit just described, rumours had been current on the island to the effect that the Empress had at length made up her mind to share the Emperor's imprisonment. Additional confirmation seemed to be that, shortly before, General Bertrand had purchased in Leghorn seven thousand coloured paper lanterns, which it was supposed were to be used for a festal reception of Marie Louise. Since there had

[4] The Emperor Napoleon paid Countess Walewska the cost of her journey, to the amount of frs. 61,000.

been no ceremonial reception of these guests, the rumour ran that the Empress and the King of Rome had come incognito to the island; and the officers of the guard wanted to send the Emperor an address, begging him to keep Marie Louise and his son on the island.

The worthy Elbanese were greatly mistaken! They were thinking much better things of Marie Louise than she deserved. The fallen Emperor was not to enjoy the happiness of embracing his wife and child. The visitor had been his belovèd. Subsequently it was commonly said that Countess Walewska's coming to Elba was an excuse for Marie Louise's staying away. Marie Louise was supposed to have taken offense, and to have been jealous of the sometime mistress of the husband she had forsaken, although Marie Walewska was now nothing more to him than a friend. During the Hundred Days, Marie Walewska once more found her way to the Emperor, while the other woman, the Empress, was still absent. Now the place was free; now she no longer troubled to hide the ties that had once bound her to Napoleon. But her appearance at the court was still inconspicuous, although she was one of the best-dressed women who came to the Elysée. Leroy found her one of his best customers. She wore dark gowns, black for the most part, for she was in mourning, her husband having died in the year 1814.

But when destiny had once again torn her friend away, Marie Walewska at length felt freed from all obligations towards Napoleon. In April 1816, nearly a year after the second abdication, she was married in Liége to Count Philippe Antoine d'Ornano, a cousin of the Emperor, at one time a colonel in the guard. The lonely man in the distant island of St. Helena heard with sorrow the news of Marie's wedding. She, too, had deserted him; had deserted him just like his wife, who, in the arms of Neipperg, was doing her best to forget the four years of her marriage to the Emperor of the French.

Marie Walewska did not live long to enjoy her new happiness. She was confined in Liége in June 1817, and this confinement proved disastrous to her. She never fully recovered. Gathering the remnants of her strength, she

travelled from Liége to Paris, but died there on December 10, 1817, in the house Napoleon had given her. Thus did the last of the women whom the great Emperor had truly loved, take the memories of his affection and tenderness down with her into an early grave. She was buried in Père Lachaise. No memorial now marks the place where the woman whom Napoleon loved was laid to rest. Only in the registers of the great necropolis do we find, on yellowing pages, the name of Countess Marie Walewska.

GERMAN PRINCESSES

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LOUISE, GRAND DUCHESS OF SAXE-WEIMAR

Amid the Weimar literary circle of those days there was a striking figure, that of a woman whose talents might have entitled her to be the central luminary of the circle; but, owing to her reserved nature, she was only accessible to a small number of chosen spirits, and was always overshadowed by the leading personalities. I refer to Grand Duchess Louise, the wife of Grand Duke Charles Augustus. She is little known to posterity; and although she was greatly respected by her contemporaries, she seldom inspired feelings of cordial friendship. Even young Goethe, inflammable though his nature was, felt, as time went on, chilled by the Grand Duchess's extraordinarily frosty temperament, although he continued to have a great affection for her. He said of her: "I looked into her soul, and I simply cannot understand what contracted her heart so narrowly. If I had not myself been so warm towards her, she would have chilled me." But he is always full of praise for her noble and refined nature, for her remarkable temperament. For him, Louise always remained "an angel." He immortalized her in the figure of the princess in *Tasso*. When he made the princess say:

> Would you know exactly what is becoming,
> Enquire only of noble-minded women.
> For in their case we shall usually find
> That everything they do is becoming.
> Propriety surrounds, as with a wall,
> The delicate and easily injured sex.
> Where morality reigns, they reign,
> And where wantonness holds sway, they are not to be found.
> If you enquire of both sexes you will find
> That man aspires to freedom, woman to morality.

he was only giving a summary of his conception of Grand Duchess Louise's nature.

There are others besides Goethe among her contemporaries, other noted personalities, who join with him in their admiration for this quiet and reserved princess.

Herder once wrote to Lavater: "She is all that you know, and a thousand times more: a tree of God in steadfastness and firmness of soul, and the most delicate flower of innocence and loyalty and friendship." Schiller described her as a "beautiful and noble figure"; and Count Leopold Stolberg spoke of her as "a princess of the rarest character, of a greatness of soul which would make any man remarkable." But the finest of all tributes is that paid to her by a woman who fully understood Louise, namely Madame de Staël. "The Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar," she wrote, "is the true exemplar of a woman predestined by nature for the highest rank. She is equally devoid of arrogance and weakness, and inspires both confidence and respect. She is animated with the heroic spirit of the old days of chivalry, without forfeiting the gentleness proper to her sex."

We can readily understand that such a woman was little suited to the high-spirited and passionate Charles Augustus, who, as Goethe bluntly tells us, "was endowed with a daimonic nature." For many, many years, therefore, this princely marriage was far from being a happy one. We can but re-echo the exclamation of the Swiss writer, Tobler, who was moved to say with astonishment, after noting the contrast between husband and wife, "what a woman mated to what a man!" Not until they were both well on in years, was there achieved a fair spiritual balance between the couple. All the more worthy of commendation, therefore, was the behaviour of this misunderstood woman at her husband's side during the years of difficulty and danger in which she had to suppress her own individuality, until at length a political event demanded the display of all her greatness of soul, when she showed herself worthy to stand by the side of the noblest feminine figures of antiquity.

Louise had always been fond of taking part in political activities, although she did not obviously interfere in the affairs of government. But she discussed matters of State with Charles Augustus, who took no steps without having first sought his wife's counsel. It is a very remarkable

fact that these two, despite their great differences in character, were usually of the same opinion in political concerns. There can be no doubt that the Grand Duchess Louise was one of the moving spirits in the political affairs of her country. At the beginning of the year 1806, she was especially concerned about the unfortunate position of Prussia. Writing to her brother, Prince Christian, she despairingly exclaimed: "Prussia! What part has Prussia played, is it now playing, and will it play in the future? In the end it will certainly rue the day, and prove the dupe."

Louise was a woman who was able to get a clear insight into every situation, and could in case of need take wise action. She was the daughter of Landgravine Caroline of Hesse-Darmstadt,[1] the "Great Landgravine," on whose tombstone Frederick the Great engraved the words: "A woman by sex, a man by spirit." But Louise was one of those who, despite all their mental talents and all their gifts of heart, never come to the front of the stage; she was, as Knebel said, "a star which shines in the dark." Among the brilliant feminine figures at the court of Weimar, and especially when compared with her able mother-in-law, Duchess Amelia, she was always in the background. Not until she was on the threshold of old age were circumstances to drag her out of her retirement.

This happened in the days when the thunder of the guns at Jena had terrified all the population of Weimar, in the days when the beautiful Queen of Prussia had taken refuge in the City of the Muses, but had had soon to leave it because the French were at the gates. It was then that the Grand Duchess of Weimar showed herself a true German princess.

For many years, Charles Augustus had been in Prussian service; and in this war against Napoleon he had led the vanguard of the main Prussian army. By having, like the Duke of Oldenburg, refused to join the Confederation of the Rhine, and by having placed his military forces at Prussia's disposal, he had aroused the wrath of the

[1] The Grand Duchess Louise of Saxe-Weimar was born in Berlin on January 30, 1757. Her father was Landgrave Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt.

Emperor of the French. His own future and that of the principality he ruled were tottering.

After the disastrous defeat of the Prussians at Jena, the inhabitants of Weimar had, therefore, good reason to tremble at the prospect of what lay before them. In the previous August, when the Confederation of the Rhine had been founded, the Grand Duchess had written to her brother: "I ought to be writing on black-edged paper, as a sign of our sorrow because of the tragical end of the Germanic constitution; but this distress is deeply graven on my heart, and on yours too I am sure. Your political existence is safeguarded for the nonce; . . . but ours is extremely uncertain, and our position is, in general, most critical. The French at our gates, or, to express the matter better, on the Saxon frontier, betoken no good to us. Still, we must not lose heart, even though we have every reason to fear."

Perhaps, when she wrote, Louise did not think that her gloomy anticipations were soon to be fulfilled. The news that the conqueror's entry was imminent ran through the streets of Weimar like wildfire. The court and the citizens were in a state of terrible agitation. Even after the skirmish at Saalfeld on October 10, 1806, several members of the grand ducal family had left Weimar. All who could, ran away. Duchess Amelia, and the heir to the throne, and Princess Caroline, left the palace on October 14th, when the first thunder of the guns was heard from Jena. They hoped to find refuge in Cassel or in Brunswick. On the evening of the same day, the French soldiers entered Weimar, plundering wherever they could.

Amid all these confusions, Grand Duchess Louise remained alone in the palace, without military protection. A small circle of faithful companions surrounded her, anxiously watching from the palace windows the scenes of terror in the streets, taking note of the brawls between the drunken soldiery and the citizens trying to defend their possessions. A fire broke out not far from the palace, burning down one side of a street. There was general scarcity, and food was difficult to procure. Even the

Grand Duchess and her train were hard put to it for supplies, since all the stores in the palace were being commandeered for Napoleon's headquarters. For twenty-four hours the Grand Duchess of Weimar had no bread, nothing more than one or two potatoes. The very kitchen had been plundered.

Louise did not allow these things to disturb her. She was like a valiant captain, who would rather go down with his ship than abandon his post. She wanted to look steadily into the eyes of the man who had, at the head of his hosts, made his way into the heart of Germany in order to partition it; she wished to stand surety to him for the conduct of the Grand Duke. Napoleon did not keep her waiting long. On the afternoon of October 15th, he entered the palace of Weimar, where the best suite of rooms had been made ready for him. The Grand Duchess and her followers had removed to one of the wings. Surrounded by her ladies and attended by Von Wolzogen, the minister of State, she stood with proud modesty at the top of the palace staircase to receive the conqueror. Napoleon, wearing his famous grey cloak, a small three-cornered hat on his head, and without any indication of his rank as commander or his position as sovereign, was boiling over with rage against the Grand Duke. When he caught sight of the Duchess, he barely noticed her, but asked her, pausing for a moment, who she was. She told him that she was the Grand Duchess of Weimar, and he answered laconically, "I am sorry for you, Madame!" According to some who describe the scene he added: "for I shall annihilate the Grand Duke!" Then, when the Duchess, as custom prescribed, moved to conduct him to his apartments, he signed to her to stay were she was, and strode past her to his quarters.

Notwithstanding this marked humiliation to which she had been subjected by the conqueror of Jena and Auerstädt, Louise next morning, at any cost to her pride, felt it necessary to beg for an audience of Napoleon. In doing this, she was filled with the hatred which, since the beginning of the revolution, she had cherished against the French, and which since the execution of the Duke of

Enghien, had been transferred to Napoleon. Diplomatically, in asking for an audience, she enquired after the health of the Emperor—this upstart, who treated the offspring of the most ancient princely houses as his equals!

Her request was granted. Napoleon received Louise with reproaches and threats. "How could your husband dare to make war against me?" was his first wrathful question. With quiet dignity, the Grand Duchess explained to him Charles Augustus's situation. The Duke, she said, could not have acted otherwise. For twenty years he had been in the service of the King of Prussia; and in so critical a moment, in an hour of need and danger, he could not without dishonour have left his chief in the lurch—especially when the latter was confronted with so powerful a foe as Napoleon.

This subtle flattery, which was in no way degrading to the person who uttered it, had its due effect upon the Emperor of the French. She knew that even great men are seldom able to withstand such an influence! Napoleon's anger was appeased by her dignified calm and nonchalance and his mood grew milder. But he went on to ask, why, in that case, the Grand Duke had not entered the Austrian service instead of the Prussian. To this Louise replied that the younger branches of the house of Saxony had always followed the example of the Electors, and since the policy of Frederick Augustus of Saxony inclined towards Prussia, the Grand Duke had necessarily followed his lead.

The Emperor seemed to be satisfied by these assurances. He allowed the Grand Duchess, without interruption, to describe the desperate condition of her unhappy country, and of the town which had been handed over to pillage. His respect for this lady, who was so steadfast amid all the dangers that threatened (so that even the thunder of the guns and the approach of enemy troops could not alarm her), seemed to grow from minute to minute. Her majesty of demeanour, her imperturbable calm, which were not troubled even for an instant, aroused a tacit admiration in Napoleon. When the Grand

GRAND DUCHESS LOUISE OF WEIMAR
After a painting by Countess von Egloffstein

Duchess begged him to stop the pillaging of the city, he at once issued orders to this effect. Finally she even succeeded in extracting from him a pledge that he would pardon the Grand Duke and leave him his throne. But this was done upon conditions. Charles Augustus was to quit the Prussian service within twenty-four hours, to come back to Weimar, and to withdraw his troops from the Prussian side!

Naturally these conditions could not inspire much hope in the breast of Louise, for in so short a space of time it was impossible to comply with Napoleon's wishes. She did not even know where the Grand Duke was. While she was still meditating about her own fate and those of her dear ones, the Emperor announced his intention to pay her a return visit in the evening. When the time came for this, he was sedulous to observe the details of court ceremonial, and presented all the members of his train to the Duchess; but this formal politeness did not prevent his making sarcastic observations upon her husband while he was conversing with her. Without circumlocution, he spoke of political affairs, and once more found in the Grand Duchess an intelligent listener and a critical observer. In the end he thought fit to explain to her that it was not he who had called up the spectre of war, for he had been forced into the war by circumstances. "Believe me, Madame," he added, "there is a Providence who guides everything; I am no more than an instrument!"

Napoleon's visit to the Grand Duchess was a fairly long one. He was pleased that she was so valiant a defender of her country and her spouse, and that she never lost composure. Her modest and yet firm behaviour had a great effect on him, though in general he had little fondness for "strong-minded women." But in this case, prudence and modesty were conjoined with a noble pride, a lofty feminine dignity, and inviolable courage—qualities which had given Louise the strength to stand up against such a man as Napoleon, before whose mighty genius persons of the stronger sex were wont to tremble. Had she been arrogant and provocative, she would have made no headway with him.

When, at last, Napoleon had returned to his own apartments, he said to General Rapp, his adjutant: "That is a woman who has not been frightened even by our two hundred cannon!" As for Louise, to herself her behaviour seemed perfectly natural, for, when her friend Madame de Staël wrote her an extremely flattering letter about the matter, she rejoined: "I have certainly passed through terrible days, days that were quite extraordinary, and have left an inextinguishable memory. But I neither might nor could avoid them; and since nothing was simpler or more natural than to stay where I was, I did the only thing that was possible to me in such circumstances. I am truly surprised that so much has been made of the matter."

Despite all that had happened, however, the Grand Duchess could not yet indulge in much hope for herself and her country. Writing to her brother Christian in the end of October, 1806, she said: "We have much to fear and little to hope; I am terribly anxious about our future." Nevertheless, Napoleon had done everything to restore peace and order in Weimar. By October 16th, pillaging was at an end in the town. Next day the Emperor left Weimar, after granting three days' respite for the return of Grand Duke Charles Augustus. But again and again Napoleon insisted that he did all this solely in order to please the Grand Duchess, and he took every opportunity of declaring how much he respected her. Despite his anger against the Grand Duke, who continually put off appearing before the conqueror, Napoleon never forgot the dignified way in which Louise had received him in the palace of Weimar. Charles Augustus owed the preservation of his country to his wife, and to the able chancellor, Von Müller. When on October 25, 1806, Friedrich von Müller had an interview with Napoleon at Potsdam, the Emperor's first question was: "You come from Weimar. What is the Grand Duchess doing?" Then, in a friendly tone, he added: "I am afraid we made a great deal of noise, and disturbed the Grand Duchess in her palace very much. I was extremely sorry, but in war-time we can't very well avoid such things."

Müller's main purpose in coming to Berlin had been to hand the Emperor a letter from the Grand Duchess Louise in which she begged Napoleon for a further extension of time on behalf of the Grand Duke, whose whereabouts was still unknown. Napoleon accepted the letter with a good grace, and replied: "Your duchess has proved steadfast, and has won my respect. I know our sudden appearance in Weimar must have been extremely annoying to her. War is hateful and barbarous. But what could I do? I was forced into the war in spite of myself!"

This propitious audience was followed by anxious days before the fate of Weimar and its ruling house was finally settled. As late as November 3rd, Talleyrand had said to Müller: "The Emperor has been greatly incensed by the whole behaviour of the Grand Duke of Weimar since the outbreak of the present war, and especially by the Duke's sending a contingent to the Prussian army and by his taking over the command of this contingent himself. The Emperor has found it very difficult to restrain himself from enforcing the natural and disastrous consequences as regards the further political existence of the Grand Duchy of Weimar. If he has, none the less, held his hand, this has simply been due to the great respect with which the steadfast and noble conduct of the Grand Duchess has impressed him."

Napoleon was certainly very wrathful on account of the continued absence of the Grand Duke; and he could hardly be appeased even by a letter from Charles Augustus to his wife, which the latter sent to the Emperor under cover of a missive of her own. Von Spiegel, a gentleman of the bed-chamber, had at length found the Grand Duke in Wolfenbüttel, and two days later the Duke had written to the Duchess. When Müller, who was again the Duchess's messenger, saw Napoleon in Berlin on November 5th, the Emperor said to him: "Mr. Counsellor, I am too old to build upon words; I can only be affected by deeds. Does not your Duke know that I can easily deprive him of his duchy?" He said this without more than a casual glance at the Duchess's letter.

The meeting was one of the stormiest that Müller had with Napoleon, and all the chancellor's diplomatic adroitness was needed to assuage the wrath of the man of might, and to turn affairs to a happy issue. In taking leave of the messenger, Napoleon once more said emphatically: "But make it perfectly clear to your Duke that he owes his country and his political existence solely to the great respect, nay to the friendship, I feel for his consort, the Duchess; and also to the friendly sentiments with which I am inspired towards her worthy sister, the Margravine.[2] . . . These excellent sisters should be a model for all the princely houses of Europe. Everything that I may still do for Weimar will be done solely out of regard for them." The very same day he wrote as follows to Louise: "I have received several letters from you, and I share all your sorrow. I have done everything you ask, but I hope that what has happened will be a lesson to the Duke of Weimar. He has made war against me without cause; he might have followed the example of the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, and might have imitated the Duke of Brunswick, who did not send any contingent, but whom I have none the less deprived of his States. Everything that I have done for the Duke has been done solely out of respect for you." Charles Augustus's interview with Napoleon, upon which everything depended, did not take place until July 18, 1807, when the Emperor was in Dresden. Neither party to the interview was pleased with the other. The Duke, in especial, was greatly disappointed with the conqueror's personality, and said afterwards to one of his confidants: "What a tremendous difference between Frederick the Great and this Emperor! How far more imposing was the presence of Frederick! Nothing that he said to me inspired any admiration or confidence." But although, in his turn, Charles Augustus made an unfavourable impression on Napoleon, the Emperor did not forget to ask cordially after the health of Grand Duchess Louise. He promised, moreover, that on

[2] Margravine Amelia of Baden had also won Napoleon's respect by her energetic behaviour. Nevertheless, in October, 1807, despite her best efforts, she was unable to secure any compensation for her son-in-law, Duke Frederick William of Brunswick.

his way back to France he would pay his respects to her in Weimar. That meeting, which was greatly looked forward to as likely to have a favourable influence on the future of the country, never took place, for Napoleon reached Weimar very early in the day, and continued his journey without a halt. But the country had been saved![3] Louise had saved it, and had thereby won the hearts of all her subjects. It was as if a veil had suddenly fallen from their eyes, a veil that had clouded their vision for years. Now for the first time they realized what a jewel they possessed in their Duchess. For her part, this sudden growth of admiration aroused her irony. As long as eighteen years later, she wrote to her brother Christian: "Before the battle of Jena, very few people had any great respect for me. But when I had done what was perfectly simple and natural, my conduct had its due effect, and I was thereupon welcomed as if I had been a newcomer, although I had already lived here for eight-and-twenty years. I assure you that before that date no one saw or greeted me when I appeared in public with my daughter-in-law. . . . You see I was not used to hear praise, nor did anyone give me reason to suppose that I was worthy of it!" The bitterness disclosed by these words was the outcome of years of anxiety, which had ultimately become second nature to the Duchess.

Although in the year 1807 Napoleon had not been able to pay his respects to the Grand Duchess, a year later he had a chance meeting of the lady for whom he had conceived so much esteem. In October 1808, he had arranged to meet the Tsar at Erfurt, where the two emperors might join in settling the destinies of the nations. The town was full of reigning princes; besides the two emperors, four kings honoured the place with their presence; and never before had the streets of Erfurt been graced by so distinguished an assembly. Erfurt being close to Weimar, Napoleon seized the opportunity of showing his regard for Grand Duchess Louise. Not only did he several times invite her to Erfurt, but at length, simply for her

[3] On November 24, 1806, Saxe-Weimar had joined the Confederation of the Rhine.

sake, he had his whole theatre, the Comédie Française, sent to Weimar, that Voltaire's *La mort de César* could be played there before the Duchess.

It was by no means agreeable to Louise to be singled out in this way, for, despite outward seeming, neither she nor her husband had really become inspired with cordial feelings towards Napoleon. True that in the year 1806 his personality had made a strong impression on the Duchess, but shortly before the Erfurt days she had written to her brother: "Emperor Napoleon is expected at Erfurt on the twenty-fifth. . . . As you may imagine, I shall not press forward to greet him there. Indeed, if I can possibly, as I hope, avoid having to go to Erfurt, so much the better."

But she had, after all, to see the man she hated. On October 6th, Napoleon, accompanied by the Tsar (with whom he had now struck up a close friendship) and all the other princes of his train, paid her a visit in Weimar. On this occasion, too, he was extremely gracious, and was even cordial to the Grand Duke. Weimar had done everything to make the monarch's stay there as agreeable as possible. Hunting, banquets, dances, theatrical performances—nothing was forgotten. The whole town was in gala dress.

During these days, Louise was a shrewd observer of all these old and new kings and queens. None of them escaped her sharp scrutiny. Of Napoleon, she wrote in a letter of October 10th, 1808: "Emperor Napoleon has grown thinner since I saw him before. But it suits him much better not to be so greatly blown out. . . . You can have no idea how cavalierly Napoleon treats the four kings who are in Erfurt. I can assure you it is worth seeing. Yesterday, for instance, they had to wait a whole hour in the ante-room before dinner, while the two emperors were closeted together. I was there, too, but, since I am neither a king nor a queen, I was only there to watch what was going on."

The years passed, and the Grand Duchess suffered under the pressure of a difficult time. Not until Napoleon's star paled during the Russian campaign, after

his power had attained its climax, did the glimmer of hope begin to shine in all hearts. Then came the general struggle of the nations to throw off the Napoleonic yoke!

It was then that Louise of Weimar had again the bitter experience of receiving the Emperor of the French. Now she did it in the hope of securing pardon for two of her subjects and servants. They had been arrested by the French soldiers, had been suspected of carrying treasonable correspondence, and were in danger of being sentenced to death.[4] When passing through Weimar on April 28, 1813, Napoleon had spent three hours with the Grand Duchess, and had been extremely cordial in his manner. As regards the liberation of the prisoners, he had given a friendly answer, although Chancellor von Müller, two days earlier, had vainly done his utmost to soften the Emperor's heart in this matter. Now Napoleon said to the Duchess: "I am delighted to do something that will please you."

When Napoleon left Weimar, Charles Augustus accompanied him as far as Eckardsberga. The Emperor treated the Grand Duke graciously, although during the before-mentioned interview with Müller, he had spoken with extreme harshness about the Grand Duke. "I know perfectly well," Napoleon had said to Müller, "that your Duke is my sworn enemy, and has never ceased to make common cause with all my enemies. Does he not keep Prussian officers in his service and in his pay? Has he not continually been in correspondence with the Empress of Austria, my mother-in-law, who in Vienna is spinning poisonous nets to enmesh me? Let him beware! It is not so easy to deceive me!"

When he had so recently used this sort of language, it is certainly surprising that the personality of Grand Duchess Louise sufficed to soften his heart. But that was the effect of his interview with her, for before leaving Weimar he ordered Marshal Berthier to set the two pris-

[4] The two were Von Spiegel, the chamberlain, and Herr von Voight, who had upon them letters in cipher addressed to Chancellor Friedrich von Müller.

oners free without delay. Then, having mounted his horse, he rode through the gate, merrily humming "Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre." This was the last time that the Grand Duchess of Weimar ever saw him. After the disastrous defeat at Leipzig, Napoleon took his way homeward by another route.

His star was setting! Little more than a year after the Saxony campaign, he had to endure the heaviest blow of his life: he was forced to abdicate! The curtain had fallen upon the Napoleonic drama. Notwithstanding her destestation of the oppressor, Grand Duchess Louise was greatly affected by this tragedy. She had never believed that Napoleon, the titan, would end his glorious career in such a fashion. The fate of the prisoner on Elba seemed to her very unsuitable for him, and she would have felt a soldier's death in the field far more becoming. Besides, she was shrewd enough to foresee an epilogue, and to feel sure that the chained lion would one day break his fetters, and that Europe would have to struggle with him once more. The events of 1815 were to show that the Grand Duchess of Weimar was right.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

QUEEN LOUISE OF PRUSSIA

"Even though posterity will not write my name among those of celebrated women, nevertheless, when it learns the sorrows of this time, it will know what I have had to suffer, and will say, 'she endured much, and was steadfast amid her sorrows!' "

That is what the Queen of Prussia once wrote to Frau von Berg. The words were a sigh from a heavily laden heart, and an echo of all the suffering and all the humiliation which Prussia had endured since the disastrous war of 1806-1807. Louise was not destined to see freedom dawn on Germany's horizon. She was not fated to share in the ecstasy of the national awakening in 1813, 1814, 1815, which led to the final overthrow of the man of might whose iron fist had imposed its heavy constraint upon Prussia as upon so many other countries. It was not for her to join with the allies in celebrating the fall of Napoleon, that "hellish monster risen out of the mire," that "unworthy and infamous assassin," as Louise wrote from Memel to Frederick William. Still less was Louise destined to live on until Germany achieved that unity of which the days of 1813 to 1815 were the forerunners. But, with just anticipation, she had once said to Gentz, the Austrian statesman, that the only salvation for their country was in a close union of all those who spoke the German tongue.

Yet this woman, though she was the very essence of nobility, beauty, and dignity, cannot be acquitted from having contributed to the oncoming of the war which was the cause of Prussia's misfortunes. She again and again most emphatically declared that she had taken no part in politics; and from her standpoint she spoke the truth, for she was free from the ambition that affected so many women famous in history, leading them to devote their whole energies to an attempt to get the reins of govern-

ment into their hands, that they might take advantage of their tyrannical influence over their royal husbands or lovers. Passion was far from being her motive force in any of the affairs of life, "for what she did and left undone was determined by her supreme reasonability and by her religious outlook on the world." But from her correspondence with Frederick William III and from other documents it is plain that she had always favoured the advent of this war. No doubt she did it in the sincere belief that fortune would smile on the Prussian arms, and that thereby Germany would be freed from foreign dominion and from all humiliations. The war of 1806 seemed to Queen Louise absolutely essential to Prussia's honour. Not to enter upon it would have been a great disgrace for her country. In this sense she delivered her testimony against Friedrich von Gentz, to whom she gave audience in Erfurt on October 9th.

"God knows," she said, "that no one has ever asked my advice about public affairs, nor have I ever wanted anyone to ask me. But if I had been asked, I must admit that I should have been in favour of the war. I believe it was inevitable. Our situation had become so desperate that we had to seek a way out. The resolution to make war would have been forced upon us, not by calculation, but by a sense of honour and duty."

When Louise spoke thus to Gentz, she was at her husband's headquarters, surrounded by the Prussian army. At first it had been decided that she should only accompany the King until the advance of the army began; but in Erfurt the Queen said that she thought she ought to stay as long as the King wished her to. However great an influence she seemed to have on Frederick William, in the last resort his wishes were always decisive for her.

But her presence in the camp at that time was strongly criticized by many people. Even among Frederick William's generals and counsellors, opinion was divided on the matter. Some considered that the Queen's being there would bring good fortune, whereas others found her presence most unseemly. Gentz, who after all that he had heard about Louise, was somewhat dubious as to her

alleged good qualities, and had looked forward to his interview with her with mixed feelings, said, after his talk with the Queen: "Her behaviour during her presence at headquarters was free from all possibility of reproach. Taking everything into consideration, I should myself have been in favour of her staying with the army."

Her deciding to remain amid all the turmoil of the war, came very near to costing Louise dear. In Weimar, where she had gone with the King three days before the battle of Jena, she was surprised by the approach of the French army; and the Queen's sudden departure northward on the morning of October 14, 1806, resembled a flight before the advancing enemy. She went by way of Mühlhausen, Göttingen, Brunswick, and Tangermünde, to Berlin. There she received news of the defeats at Jena and Auerstädt. Now her only resource was to continue her flight, taking her children with her.

She could not snatch a moment's rest until she reached Memel. Thence, in bitter sorrow, mentally and bodily ill, she watched the political negotiations which were to settle the fate of her beloved people. Her diary became the dumb witness of days and nights filled with anxiety and pain. While staying at Ortelsburg, on December 5, 1806, she had copied out the lines:

> Who never ate with tears his bread,
> Who never through night's heavy hours
> Sat weeping on his lonely bed—
> He knows you not, ye heavenly powers!

Never have Goethe's lovely verses been more profoundly felt than by the unhappy Queen during that tragical period in which all hope for her country had fled. For she had no belief in the possible magnanimity of the man whose bulletins had been so full of gross invectives, who had entered Berlin as conqueror, and who had now taken up his residence in the palace which had so long been one of the glories of the Hohenzollerns. On November 13th, writing to Countess Voss, her mistress of the household and confidante, she said: "Bonaparte is doing everything he can to insult me. His booted aide-de-camps are sprawling on the sofas in my Gobelin drawing-room

at Charlottenburg. . . He amuses himself in the town of Berlin, but he says that he does not want any sand and that he will leave this sandpit to the King. We have to go on living without being able to take vengeance for the insult!"

It is easy to understand this cry of indignation from Queen Louise. Napoleon had wounded her in every possible way; in her womanly dignity, and in her honour as a sovereign and a patriot! He was not content with allowing the "Moniteur," the government organ in Paris, and the "Télégraphe," to shower abuse upon her; he himself did the same thing in his bulletins, in his correspondence, and in his conversations with his ministers and his marshals. His bitter sarcasms, his mocking temperament, found expression in the words about the Queen contained in the first bulletin of the Grand Army on October 8, 1806. It is addressed to Marshal Berthier. "Marshal, we are given an appointment on the field of honour for the eighth; a Frenchman never fails to keep such an appointment. Since we learn that a beautiful Queen is to witness the fray, we shall be polite, and without taking rest we shall march into Saxony. . . . The Queen, dressed as an Amazon, is with the army, wearing the uniform of a dragoon. She writes twenty letters every day, in the hope of fanning the flames. We might be looking at Armida, who, in her blind rage, sets fire to her own palace. . . . Following the example of these two great persons [Queen Louise and Prince Louis Ferdinand], the whole court is shouting for war."

Another time, in the ninth bulletin, from Weimar under date October 17th, Napoleon's abuse was reserved for the Queen, whilst he represented King Frederick William as blameless. "It seems that everything we have been told of her is true. She was here in order to fan the flames of war. She is a woman with a pretty face but a poor intelligence, and is quite unable to foresee the consequences of her actions. Instead of blaming her we can today only commiserate her, for she must be terribly afflicted by the pangs of conscience at having brought so much sorrow on her country, and because of the influence

she has exercised over her husband. As for him, everyone agrees that he is a man of honour, who wanted peace and the well-being of his people."

But the palm among these communications is taken by the famous nineteenth bulletin despatched from Charlottenburg on October 11th. In this, Napoleon wrote ambiguously about the relationship between Queen Louise and Tsar Alexander, whom Louise was said to regard as the ideal of chivalry and friendship. She had placed all her hopes of the rescue of her country in him. She was soon to learn, to her great distress, how much she had been deceived in this amiable but false prince.

"The anger against the originator of the war," wrote Napoleon, "has risen to the highest pitch. . . .Everyone is convinced that the Queen is responsible for all the sufferings of the Prussian people. Everywhere we hear it said: 'A year ago, she was so good, so gentle. But how much she has altered since her memorable meeting with Tsar Alexander!' In the Queen's rooms at Potsdam there has been found a picture of the Tsar of Russia, given to her by him. There was also found at Charlottenburg her correspondence with the King during the last three years; and in addition some letters written by Englishmen to the effect that no account should be paid to the treaties made with Emperor Napoleon, but that Prussia should put all her trust in Russia. These last are documents of real historical value. They show (if further proof were needed) how unhappy are the princes who allow their wives to have any influence in political affairs. The letters, the reports, and the State papers stank of musk, and were found among ribbons and lace, and other toilet articles belonging to the Queen. She had turned the heads of all the ladies in Berlin, but now they have changed their opinion."

The Emperor of the French would spare the Queen of Prussia nothing. He compared her, not only to Tasso's Armida, but also to the beautiful Helen upon whom Troy's misfortunes depended. Though she was a woman, in his dealings with her he forgot his chivalry, and paid no heed to the fact that she was a noble-minded but extremely

sensitive and refined individual. In his hatred for Prussia and for the weaklings who at that time were guiding the policy of that unhappy State, he directed all his fury against the unfortunate Queen, who, in good faith, had tried to instil a little resolution into the aforesaid weaklings. Frederick William's vacillation and obstinacy were matters of common knowledge. Napoleon should have shown more moderation in his utterances about Louise, even though he might justly reproach her with undeniable facts. For it is perfectly true that Louise was greatly influenced by her meeting with the Tsar in Berlin during the year 1805, and that she spoke of Alexander as her only trustworthy friend; and it is also true that she had urged Frederick William to declare war. Whereas the King of Prussia and his minister Haugwitz were still hoping to remain allied with France and to live at peace, Louise considered that "the monster must be felled to the earth."

She could not forgive Napoleon for having infringed the neutrality of Ansbach in the year 1805. Thenceforward she was on the side of the war party, especially after the treaty of Pressburg had deprived Prussia of Ansbach. She could not get over such an affront; and it seemed to her that there was nothing left but to take up arms against the ruthless and ambitious conqueror. Subsequently, writing to her brother George, she said that her intimates had reproached her with having been the cause of Prussia's misfortunes; but as to this she added: "I often deplore the consequences, but do not regret having acted upon the principle that I followed. I shall never rue what was made sacred by honour and self-respect!"

Since Napoleon hated all intervention in politics on the part of women, since he loathed women's rule, and despised princes who allowed themselves to be swayed by women, he was predisposed to have little sympathy with the Queen of Prussia, even though everyone sang her praises for her charm and nobility of mind. He regarded her as one of those women who forget their womanly dignity, and throw themselves into the political arena with virile courage, energy, and ambition, though

they lack the experience of the tried statesman, and therefore tend to ruin everything they touch. He looked upon her as one of those bluestockings for whom he had the greatest possible antipathy. That is the only possible explanation of his outburst of wrath against a defenceless woman who happened to be his enemy. For Napoleon, women were merely ornaments, and no woman should ever try to be anything else. He made no difference between a woman and a pretty picture or a delicately modelled vase. For him, women were purely decorative; and Josephine was right in saying that at the Emperor's court women might exercise an influence over him for five or six days in the course of a year, but that for the rest of the time they were nothing or almost nothing to him. Even the admirers of Napoleon's overwhelming genius and greatness cannot but reproach him for the way in which, as far as his conduct towards Louise was concerned, he was utterly devoid of magnanimity, tact, refinement, and chivalry. They will never be able to forgive him for casting mud at a woman whose reputation was spotless, and who had merely made a mistake! Even his personal intimates were far from approving his accusations against the Queen of Prussia.

At a later date, it is true, Napoleon wished to remedy his injustice, and had nothing but good to say of Louise. "The Queen of Prussia," thus his words are reported in the *Mémorial de Sainte Héléne,* "had many good qualities; she was extremely capable. . . .She was talented, and her manners were extraordinarily pleasing; even her coquetry was not without its charm." When he was talking to Dr. O'Meara, in St. Helena one day, and the conversation turned on Louise, Napoleon said: "I had a great respect for her, and if the King had brought her to Tilsit at once he would probably have secured better conditions. She was elegant, clever, and extraordinarily well-informed." But these amends came too late for the Queen, who was not alive to know that Napoleon's views had changed. Certainly when she was in Memel, she had no reason to fancy that he would ever say a good word for her. His hatred for her seemed inextinguishable.

None the less, after the battle of Friedland, which decided Prussia's fate on June 14, 1807, she still hoped for an acceptable peace, for on June 24th, she wrote to her husband: "Perhaps Napoleon also wants peace, and will therefore give us easy terms. But that is not the right word. The man has no sense of justice, but it may be that some whim will make him do things which no one expects."

Frederick William had written to her that a meeting with Napoleon and Alexander was in prospect. This news quite shook her composure, and filled her with alarm. The letter, part of which has just been quoted, was her reply. She went on to say: "If you are really compelled to meet the 'devil' with Tsar Alexander, the general opinion is here that the results may be good. But for my part I must tell you that I am inclined to think the more we feed his vanity the more exorbitant will be his demands."

In actual fact, next day, June 25th, the two Emperors met upon a raft moored in the Niemen. The King of Prussia remained on land, for Napoleon had not invited him to this first meeting. But the Emperor of the French had a talk with the King of Prussia next day. Then the three monarchs met in Tilsit to discuss terms of peace. Russia's policy had suddenly taken a French turn, and the Tsar described the Emperor of the French as a philanthropist. But owing to the rapacious demands of the conqueror, the peace negotiations dragged on. The Prussian court was in despair at the enormity of Napoleon's claims, an especial difficulty being his wish for the left bank of the Elbe and for Magdeburg.

In Tilsit Frederick William, unapproachable in his pride and laconic in his speech, could make no headway with Napoleon. The Emperor avoided talking to the King of Prussia about current affairs, and treated him as a person of no importance. All he would discuss with Fredrick William were insignificant matters, such as uniform buttons, shakos, and the like; and he was continually making fun of the Prussian monarch. The King's associates vainly endeavoured to make him overcome his antipathy to the Emperor of the French, and to temper his manner

with a little more geniality. This was beyond Frederick William's powers, even in his present terrible position, when everything depended upon his demeanour towards the conqueror. Nothing could break down his stiffness and reserve. He certainly might have been more amiable to Napoleon, without going so far as to put on "velvet paws," as Louise once expressed it. His intense loathing for Napoleon is shown in a letter he wrote to the Queen from Picktupöhnen, under date June 26, 1807: "I have seen him! I have had a conversation with this monster, spawn of hell, made by Beelzebub to be the plague of the earth! I find it impossible to describe the impression his appearance has made on me. Never have I endured a greater trial. My gorge rose during this horrible interview. All the same, he was cool, civil but by no means forthcoming; and he paid me no personal attention. My general impression was that he was anything but friendly to us. But he refrained from talking about our future destiny, and avoided touching upon this matter."

In this desperate situation, it was generally felt that the salvation of Prussia turned upon Queen Louise's presence at Tilsit; for she, as Kleist wrote to his sister, had a comprehensive grasp of the whole great affair. "She collects around her all our great men, whom the King neglects; those from whom alone rescue can come. It is she who holds together all that has not yet been completely destroyed!" The court, like Kleist, hoped everything from Louise. Perhaps her marvellous affability would succeed in getting better conditions out of Napoleon. That is what General Kalckreuth wrote to the King on June 28th. The sagacious Hardenburg also believed that the Queen's presence would do a great deal of good.

When it was proposed to Louise that she should meet the conqueror (this man who had shown no magnanimity, this man who had so profoundly humiliated her), in order to beg a favour from him for her country, her first feeling was that she had been degraded by such a proposal, and her pride rose in revolt. She said to General Kessel: "It seems to me as if I might as well be going to my death;

as if this man would have me destroyed." But her lucid understanding soon grasped the necessities of the case. She perceived that she must make a sacrifice on behalf of her nation and on behalf of her husband, and was able to do it willingly. The meeting of the three monarchs, who were so different one from another, inspired her with very little confidence or hope. She had written to her husband on June 27th: "I am very uneasy about this sojourn in Tilsit. You and the Tsar, who are honesty personified, have to deal with embodied cunning, with the devil, with Dr. Faust and his familiar[1]—no, this will not work, for no one is his equal in adroitness!" Three days later: "I will come, I will hasten to Tilsit, if you wish me to, if you think that I can do any good there."

In the beginning of July, the King had written to her about Napoleon in somewhat more favourable terms. "What a wonderfully organized head he has! As I have often said, if he liked he could do a great deal of good with it. With the means at his disposal, he could be the benefactor of humanity, just as easily as his ambitious plans have hitherto made him a scourge of mankind." But on another occasion he characterizes Napoleon with considerable perspicacity: "One need only see him on horseback to understand the whole man. He goes ahead at full gallop, utterly careless of what is being overthrown in his mad career."

No hopes had awakened in Louise's heart; but her religious faith gave her unshaken confidence in God, from whom she expected all that was good. During the gloomy days at Memel she wrote to her father, Duke Charles Louis Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, after the events at Friedland on June 17th: "Do not think that I am faint-hearted. I have two main reasons to lift me above all my troubles: the first is the thought that we are not the sport of chance, but are all in God's hand, under the guidance of providence; the other is that if we fall, we fall with honour! . . . I bear everything with the calm and resignation which nothing but an easy conscience and an unshaken confidence can give. Be satisfied, therefore, my

[1] By the "familiar," Louise means Talleyrand.

dear father, that we can never be wholly unhappy, and that many who have the happiness to wear a crown are less happy than we."

It was with such thoughts in her mind that the Queen had set out for Tilsit, although deeply grieved that she must go as one who comes to beg favours, and without having been invited by the ruler of the world. For, although Napoleon had sympathetically asked the King of Prussia about his sick child, Princess Alexandrine, and subsequently at dinner had drunk to the health of Queen Louise, he had not sent the latter any official invitation. She trembled at the thought of the terrible moment when she must stand before this man face to face. Recently she had congratulated herself at being so much luckier than her husband, in that she had not to make the acquaintance of the "monster"! But she was encouraged by the conviction that when he saw her he would be put to shame by her dignity, and would be moved to milder views. She could not but feel sure that her journey to Tilsit would bear good fruit.

On July 4th Louise, accompanied by Countess Voss, Countess Tauentzien, and Chamberlain von Buch, reached the King's headquarters at Picktupöhnen, and alighted at the parsonage. On the fifth, Caulaincourt and Duroc waited on her, bringing the Emperor's excuses for his inability to pay her his respects in Picktupöhnen, since he could not enter neutral territory. But he invited the Queen to come to see him at Tilsit. Next day, therefore, July 6th, Louise drove to Tilsit and saw the Emperor of the French, who that very day wrote to Josephine in Paris saying: "The beautiful Queen of Prussia is to sup with me this evening."

Louise drove to the house which had been placed at Frederick William's disposal at Tilsit, although Napoleon had provided a special residence for the Queen, as luxuriously furnished as the resources of the place would allow. She was unwilling to accept any such attentions from her foe. Tsar Alexander, Frederick William, and Count von der Goltz (Hardenberg's successor), were awaiting her in the modest mansion. The Tsar spoke to

her consolingly and said: "Take it upon yourself, and save the State!" They all did their best to encourage her for the painful encounter. The poor Queen's head was in a whirl, and in despair she exclaimed to those around her: "Please don't say anything more to me. I want quiet, so that I can collect my thoughts."

Next moment the clatter of horses's hoofs was heard outside. The Queen was left alone. Countess Voss and Countess Tauentzien went down the steps to receive Napoleon at the foot. He had come on horseback, accompanied by the whole of his staff, to visit the Queen of Prussia. Alexander and Frederick William were also there to receive him. He dismounted briskly, and ran lightly up the steps, at the top of which Louise, introduced by the King, received him.

At this moment, the Queen looked more beautiful than ever. The sorrows through which she had passed had given her fine countenance the consecration of affliction. The roses had paled on her cheeks, and her face seemed, as it were, illuminated by a celestial sheen; her fine eyes were luminous with the anticipation of the good action she was about to perform, for she was now convinced that she would be able to soften the conqueror's heart. Her tall form, admirably proportioned, charming and dignified, was clad in white silk crêpe, embroidered with silver. In her brown tresses gleamed a diadem of pearls, looking like an aureole of tears. In a word, the Queen's whole aspect was at once so fascinating and so full of majesty, that for a moment Napoleon was a trifle embarrassed. His account of the matter afterwards was that the Queen had received him like Mademoiselle Duchesnois on the stage as Ximena, and that this had quite disconcerted him.

But the Queen, unpleasant though her position might appear, was given courage and firmness by the cause she had undertaken. She was "completely filled with the high thought of duty." In this momentous hour, she was able to put the past out of her mind. She received the Emperor of the French with a courteous apology for the inconvenience he must have suffered in coming up such

steep steps to visit her. Napoleon pulled himself together, and chivalrously replied: "What would one not do in order to reach such a goal?" Thereafter the two had a long conversation. The Emperor of the French and the Queen of Prussia were alone together. Not even Talleyrand was present.

The appearance of "this dread man" did not make an unfavourable impression upon Louise. All her intimates —her husband, Countess Voss, Frau von Berg, etc.—had been unanimous in declaring that Napoleon was hideous. Frederick William had described him as "looking atrociously vulgar." Countess Voss had said he was "of a strikingly repulsive aspect; with a fat, bloated, brownish face; obese, small, and quite without a figure." She declared that his small round eyes rolled in sinister fashion, and that he looked the "incarnation of success." The only good features she would concede to him were his mouth and his teeth.

Queen Louise was juster. She considered that in Napoleon's head she could detect the pure lines of the great Caesars. She thought him noble and distinguished in expression. To her dear brother George, she subsequently wrote: "His head is well formed; his features disclose that he is a thinker. The whole reminds me of a Roman emperor. When he smiles, his mouth grows kindly; he can be very amiable."

In short, when Napoleon stood before her in his simple green uniform, quite unadorned, she found it hard to believe that this little man had wrought so much harm to her country by his ambition. In her conciliatory mood, she was able at the very outset of the conversation to bring herself to speak of the matters she had most at heart. She begged Napoleon not to misunderstand her. If she meddled in politics, it was only because, as sovereign princess and as the mother of her children, she felt it her duty to do all in her power to save them from sorrow. But Napoleon did not seem inclined to enter into a political conversation. He kept on bringing the talk back to matters of no moment. For instance, he asked her where she had had her pretty dress made; whether the

crêpe had been manufactured in Silesia; and so on. But the afflicted Queen would not allow herself to be led astray.

With dignified composure, and as one who is mistress of the situation, she said to Napoleon: "Sire, have we come here to talk of trifles?" Thereupon Napoleon listened to her more attentively. The longer the conversation lasted, the more confidence did Louise inspire. Napoleon, who would maybe not have been proof against the Queen's womanly charms, had not his policy been so imperious in its demands, and had not the King of Prussia come into the room at the very moment when the Emperor was perhaps about to concede some important points, gave Louise answers which did not in the end commit him to anything, although they might justify the Queen in hoping. In fact, he gave himself up to the agreeable sensation of being in the company of a beautiful and talented woman; but he did not allow himself to surrender wholly to her charm. He was amiable and obliging; so much so that when he took his departure hope had revived in the unhappy Queen's heart. He had said: "We shall see! We shall see!" These were his last words, except that he had, as he left, invited her to dinner that evening.

But even though Napoleon's iron will had been weakened for a moment at sight of this splendid woman, the weakness speedily passed off, for Prussia's fate had for him long since been decided. He would never allow his political designs to be interfered with by his sentiments. So great a statesman could not succumb to such influences. That his plans had been fixed long before the interview just described is shown by what he said to General Gourgaud in St. Helena: "Queen Louise was too late in coming to Tilsit: everything was already settled. . . . I could not give up Magdeburg, for I needed it to protect the King of Saxony."

Nevertheless Queen Louise was cheerful and full of hope when, at eight o'clock that evening, she was driving to dine with the Emperor, seated in his State carriage beside Marshal Berthier. The other guests that night were such as raised her spirits. Besides Frederick William and Tsar Alexander, Napoleon had invited Prince

Henry of Prussia, Grand Duke Constantine, King Joachim Murat, Crown Prince Louis of Bavaria, and old Countess Voss. Louise was again resplendent in her beauty. She was wearing dark-red, gold-embroidered gauze. Her head-dress, was a turban of red silk chiffon, which became her amazingly well. Napoleon chaffed her a little about this head-dress, saying it might annoy Tsar Alexander, who was at this time making war against the Turks. In the same sportive vein, Louise answered that the only person there likely to be interested in her turban was Rustam, the Mameluke, Napoleon's servant. The dinner passed off very pleasantly. Napoleon was extremely attentive to the Queen, and conversed in friendly fashion with Countess Voss.

When dinner was over, he took a rose from a neighbouring vase and gallantly offered it to the Queen. At first she was inclined to refuse such an attention. Then, true woman, she remembered that she must be diplomatic, and said that she would rejoice to accept it—but only with Magdeburg! Thereupon the conversation was brought back to the question of the hour. Napoleon asked the Queen how Prussia could have dared to make war on him, and Louise replied in the proud words which Talleyrand so greatly praised: "Sire, the renown of Frederick the Great made us overestimate our strength." Napoleon was extremely courteous, but again refrained from committing himself to any pledge. "She made use of all her talents in the encounter with me, and she had a great many"—thus Napoleon declared afterwards in St. Helena.. "Her behaviour was most pleasing, but I was determined to stick to my own plan, although I had to use the greatest possible care to avoid pledging myself in any way, and to escape giving some ambiguous promise; all the more since various persons, and especially Tsar Alexander, were watching me very closely." Nevertheless the day ended hopefully for Louise. She was by no means dissatisfied with the results of her conversation with the Emperor of the French. At the close he had said: "Madame, I have always been assured that you were inclined to interfere in politics. Now, after

what I have heard this evening, I am sorry that you do not."

All the more bitter, then, was the disappointment, all the more distressing the experience, of the morrow. The peace, which before her coming to Tilsit had been hanging fire, was suddenly signed within four and twenty hours, without Napoleon's having asked for a further interview with Louise. That day he had ridden past her house several times, but had never called. Are we to suppose that he was really afraid of succumbing to the irresistible charm of her personality, just as Tsar Alexander had in the year 1802—for it was only thanks to the personal influence of the Queen that the alliance between Russia and Prussia had been entered into? Napoleon's ambitious designs made it impossible for him to give way to the feelings that anyone else in his situation would have experienced, made it impossible for him to grant milder conditions. On the evening of July 6th, he had said to the Tsar: "The Queen of Prussia is a charming woman; her soul is the expression of her intelligence; in very truth, instead of taking away her crown, one might well be inclined to lay another at her feet! . . . I am very glad that the King of Prussia came in when he did, for in another quarter of an hour I should have promised the Queen anything she wanted."

Yet Louise had to learn, to her bitter sorrow, that his demands were much more exacting than they had been before her arrival. This unfortunate upshot appeared to her a profound personal humiliation. It would certainly seem as if the haste with which he now settled matters implied that he did not feel perfectly sure of himself, even though he said to Caulaincourt: "My plans are fixed. God knows that the loveliest pair of eyes in the world (and they were very lovely, Caulaincourt) would not make me budge a finger's breadth!" On July 7th, and again on July 8th, Napoleon wrote to Josephine in the following strain: "The Queen of Prussia had supper with me yesterday. I had to be very much on my guard to avoid making the concessions she was working to secure. I like her very much. . . . By the time these lines reach

QUEEN LOUISE OF PRUSSIA
After a painting by Grassi

you, peace will have been made with Prussia and Russia, and Jerome will have been recognized as King of Westphalia with three million inhabitants. . . .'' In the second letter we read: ''The Queen of Prussia is a delightful woman. Her manner is most ingratiating, but you need not be jealous. That sort of thing runs off me like water off a duck's back. . . . Besides, it would cost me too much if I were to play the gallant.''

The terms of peace had been announced. Prussia had to cede all the provinces west of the Elbe, Kottbus, Cuxhaven, the Netze district, and Kulm, New East Prussia, South Prussia, and Danzig, with an area of four miles round the last-named town. Memel was placed at the Tsar's disposal, but Alexander did not take it. Part of East Prussia went to Saxony under the name of the Duchy of Warsaw. Jerome, as already said, became King of Westphalia. Furthermore, Prussia pledged herself to close her ports to English bottoms. To sum up, she remained entirely in the conqueror's hands.

No greater slight could possibly have been inflicted on Queen Louise. She had come to Tilsit, throwing aside all consideration of the pride proper to her station, in the hope of getting better conditions from Napoleon. She had gained absolutely nothing! When signing the treaty of peace, Napoleon had told Count von Goltz that all he had said to the Queen had been the small change of politeness and that Prussia owed her preservation to the Tsar alone. Had it not been for Alexander, said Napoleon, he would have set his brother Jerome on the throne of Prussia. ''Queen Louise,'' he went on, ''has never been a friend of mine, . . . but I forgive her. Being a woman, it was not necessary that she should weigh political interests carefully. She has been punished for her love of power, but in the end she has shown a great deal of character in her misfortune. . . . We must do her the justice to admit that she has said very reasonable things. . . . She has certainly been far more frank with me than the King was, for he did not think it necessary to give me his confidence.''

In the evening the Queen had to face the torment of

again feasting at Napoleon's table. He was giving a banquet in her honour. It resembled a funeral feast. The company was silent and depressed; Napoleon seemed embarrassed. What had just happened pressed upon all who were there like a nightmare, and the conversation was forced, although Murat, who was ever of a lively disposition, tried to strike a lighter tone.

When the meal was over, the Queen wished once more to discuss the political situation with Napoleon, for she had to snatch at this last chance of achieving something. But he cut her short ungraciously. Nevertheless, when she was going back to her carriage, on Napoleon's arm, she could not withhold the observation: "Is it possible that when I have been in close contact with the man of the century and of history, he will not give me the satisfaction of ensuring my eternal gratitude?" His curt answer was: "What can you expect, Madame? You should commiserate me, for what has happened is the effect of my evil star."

Saddened and profoundly mortified, the Queen drove away. Like Mary Tudor, she was wont to say afterwards: "If anyone could open my heart, he would find the name of Magdeburg graven there." She never saw Napoleon again, although shortly before her death she was once in the mind to seek an interview. After the meeting at Tilsit, although she had, in her opinion, been deceived, disillusioned, and sacrificed, her opinion of him was far more favourable than before. In the year 1808, however, when she learned that Tsar Alexander was to meet Napoleon in Erfurt, her hatred seemed to flame up once more. Writing to the Tsar from Königsberg on September 8th, she said: "So you are going to see Napoleon again, the man who, I know, is as repulsive to you as he is to me; the man who can subjugate everything and everyone, and who is believed, in the case of those with whom he cannot directly force, to mislead them into steps whereby they lose an advantage which he has never possessed—the advantage of enjoying public esteem! I implore you, dear cousin, with all the affection of which my friendship is capable, to beware of this most adroit liar. Listen to my

voice, which speaks only for your sake, for the sake of your fame. . . . Do not allow yourself to be led into undertaking anything against Austria!" How the "dear cousin" followed the Queen's counsel is a matter of common knowledge.

But apart from these outpourings to her friend, Louise, in her utterances concerning Napoleon, became much more gentle than of yore. This change may well have been due to the fact that, after he had met the Queen of Prussia, the Emperor never failed to show her the greatest respect and admiration. Whenever her name came up in conversation, he praised her most cordially. Never again did he permit himself to speak scornfully or abusively of Louise. Now that he knew her, he was well aware that she deserved nothing but respect, veneration, and admiration. After the events at Tilsit, he said to Tsar Alexander that he believed the Queen would manage public affairs better than the King. If Louise, despite her shrewd diplomacy, was able to effect nothing, this was not due to any lack of skill on her part. The trouble was that Napoleon's will was absolutely firm in political matters, and that he would never allow any woman to modify his plans. Let us read again what he once said to Roederer: "States are lost as soon as women interfere in public affairs. . . . If a woman were to advocate some political move, that would seem to me sufficient reason for taking the opposite course!" Such was his principle, and he was never false to it!

HUSBAND AND FATHER

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MARIE LOUISE

I

NAPOLEON'S second marriage was his destruction. Policy united him to an Austrian archduchess and policy separated her from him. Prince Schwarzenberg said as much in the year 1813. Napoleon himself called this period of his life "an abyss hidden by flowers." In fact, as soon as the flowers withered—the flowers with which at first the gulf seemed covered—it yawned before his sight in its unfathomable depths. But he saw the danger too late! He believed that the union would bring himself and France the greatest possible political advantages; and would, above all, ensure permanent peace. At the same time he entertained the disastrous idea that he could make up by power for what was denied to him by birth. His ambition was satisfied. Through this marriage he displayed to the world something which had no precedent in history; he, the upstart, the son of the revolution, the usurper, was able to choose his consort from the oldest of the ruling houses of Europe! He, Napoleon Bonaparte, became the son-in-law to the Emperor of Austria, who until recently had been known as "German Emperor"! Thus was Napoleon finally accepted into the community of kings. The corner-stone was laid to his dynasty, for this young archduchess, it seemed, could guarantee him heirs. "The welfare of France demands that the founder of the fourth dynasty should attain old age, surrounded by direct issue, as a protection and guarantee for all the French, and as a pledge for French glory!" Thus did Prince Eugene, son of the divorced Josephine, deliver himself in the Council of State on December 16th, 1809.

But the Emperor of the French was to pay dear for this step to which ambition and policy had impelled him. Throne and empire collapsed pitifully; and nothing remained of his fabulous happiness, of the brilliant period

of his marriage with the Emperor's daughter—nothing but painful memories were left to the exile on the inhospitable rock in mid-ocean. Not till he was in St. Helena did he fully realize the folly of his actions. As if in exculpation he remarked there one day: "It has been said that I was intoxicated by the union with the House of Austria, that I believed after my marriage that I had really become sovereign, in a word that for a moment I seriously fancied myself Alexander the son of God! . . . Was not that perfectly natural? I had married a young and beautiful woman. Was I not entitled to rejoice at this? Might I not devote a few moments of my life to her without being reproached for it? Why should anyone blame me for having given myself up to my happiness for a time?"

In truth, not only Napoleon, but anyone else, might have been proud of such an acquisition, especially since the Emperor of the French was not even a friend of the ruler whose daughter he took to wife. No doubt Austria and France were temporarily at peace; but it was only a little while since the guns had ceased firing and the smoke had cleared. The mounds over the graves of the warriors who had fallen at Wagram were still fresh. Austria still groaned beneath taxes imposed by the conqueror. It was still mourning the loss of its territories, and suffering severely under the general consequences of the wars which it had waged with France since the revolution. The memory of the last victory of the French had left gaping wounds in all Austrian hearts. "God and his destroying angel, Napoleon, hold sway over us!" exclaimed Gentz; and his words were the echo of the feelings of the Austrian people. France, which for decades had been fateful to the House of Habsburg, which had sent Archduchess Marie Antoinette to the scaffold, this France now demanded on behalf of its ruler a new sacrifice to policy!

The rumour that the Emperor Napoleon, having divorced his wife, and after knocking at the doors of various courts, had fixed his choice on the young Archduchess Marie Louise, daughter of Emperor Francis,

came to the Austrians like thunder from a clear sky. Had the foundations of the earth been shattered, they could not have been more amazed. No one would believe the incredible, the monstrous tidings. Emperor Francis's daughter to marry the hereditary enemy, the upstart! Even Marie Louise, the central figure of these reports, was far from taking them seriously. Was she to become the wife of "Bonaparte," of "the Corsican," of "Anti-Christ," of the bugbear of her childhood's days? Was she to spend all her life at the side of the man who had brought so much suffering to her beloved father and to her country; the man before whom they had all had to flee; the man who was so rough and brutal, she had been told, that he boxed his minister's ears, and even slew his generals with his own hands? Such a union was impossible to think of. The mere mention of Napoleon's name filled Marie Louise with horror. She was certain that her father would never ask from her so dreadful a sacrifice. Quite confidently, on January 10, 1810, she wrote from Budapest to her only intimate friend, Victoire de Poutet:[1]

"I hear Kotzeluch[2] talking about Napoleon's divorce. I think I heard him say that I have been chosen as successor; but he is mistaken there, for Napoleon would be much too much afraid of encountering a refusal, and he is so eager to bring us more trouble that he would never make such a request; and papa is far too good to constrain my wishes in so important a matter." The same day Marie Louise wrote to Countess von Colloredo as follows: "I let people talk, and don't bother about what they say. I am only sorry for the unfortunate princess whom he will choose, for I myself shall certainly not become the victim of policy!"

Marie Louise definitely believed that Napoleon would choose the daughter of Prince Maxmillian of Saxony, or one of the princesses of Parma. She never dreamed that she herself was seriously considered. Yet it was she who

[1] Victoire was the daughter of Gräfin von Colloredo, Marie Louise's sometime governess, by her first marriage.

[2] Marie Louise's pianoforte teacher.

was to be the victim. Her father was to sacrifice her to his policy, for both he and Metternich thought that a family alliance with the mighty Emperor of the French would be a powerful means of safeguarding the Austrian Empire. Having from his earliest days been used to the fact that the princesses of the House of Austria were not asked about their feelings when marriage was in question, Francis troubled little to enquire as to his daughter's likes and dislikes. In Budapest he had already informed her it was possible that Napoleon would ask for her hand.[3] He had then asked her what her answer would be. Marie Louise was a very good daughter; she loved her father more than anyone else in the world. In him she honoured, not only the father, but also the ruler of a great realm. She always saw him surrounded by the radiance of imperial power and majesty. His will was sacred to her; it was the Emperor's will as well as her father's. She did not venture to offer any serious resistance, even though at the first suggestion that she might become the wife of the detested man, she shrank back in terror. It was enough that her father should desire this marriage; all other interests must give way. In Budapest, therefore, she had answered that she would be guided by him in everything, if he considered that his policy demanded this immense sacrifice.

Emperor Francis, therefore, was not surprised when Metternich,[4] who was commissioned by him to give his daughter the first official intimation of Napoleon's proposal for her hand, brought back the following answer from Marie Louise: "Tell my father that if the welfare of the country is at stake, he alone must decide. Beg him to fulfil his duties as sovereign, and not to subordinate them to my personal interests." Obedience, and nothing else, was expected from young Marie Louise. Had she, contrary to all anticipation, been refractory, her father's will would none the less have constrained her.

Besides, in Paris her destiny had long since been

[3] This must have been shortly after Marie Louise had written the letters above quoted.

[4] Metternich conducted the negotiations with the French court. As far back as 1807, he had contemplated an alliance with Napoleon.

decided. In this matter Napoleon had once more acted in his usual arbitrary fashion; for although he had not yet received a definite assent from the Austrian court, he had drafted and signed the marriage treaty—with the remark that this treaty was only provisional, and that the real signing of the marriage contract was to take place in Vienna.

Floret, secretary to the Austrian legation, was entrusted with the taking of this contract to Vienna. On February 27th, he was followed by Napoleon's confidant, Marshal Berthier, Prince of Neuchâtel, who went to Vienna as plenipotentiary to make a formal application for the Archduchess's hand. Furthermore, Napoleon had sent General Lauriston bearing two holograph letters to Emperor Francis and Marie Louise—letters the writing of which caused him endless trouble. But with Méneval's help they had been made fairly legible. Napoleon's letter to his future wife ran as follows: "Dear Cousin, the brilliant qualities which distinguish your person have aroused in us the desire to serve you and to honour you. Inasmuch as we are approaching to the Emperor, your father, requesting him to entrust Your Imperial Highness's happiness to us, may we venture to hope that you will graciously accept the sentiments that move us to this step? Dare we flatter ourselves that you are not deciding on this step solely from a sense of duty and filial obedience? If Your Imperial Highness has but a spark of inclination towards us, we shall carefully cherish this sentiment, and shall make it our supreme task to be always and in everything agreeable to you, so that some day we may hope to be happy enough to have won all your love. This is our only endeavour, and we beg Your Imperial Highness to feel kindly towards us."

Count Anatole de Montesquieu was chosen by Napoleon to take his bethrothal gifts. They consisted of a portrait of Napoleon encircled by sixteen large diamonds, valued at six hundred thousand francs; a necklace worth nine hundred thousand francs; and a pair of ear-rings worth four hundred thousand francs. These were indeed imperial presents! The young Archduchess, who had not

been brought up luxuriously, seemed dazzled by such a wealth of diamonds. Perhaps she gave her affirmative answer with a somewhat lighter heart when she realized that as Empress of the French she would have all the treasures of the world at her feet.

Vienna soon forgot the painful impression which had spread through the city at the news of the betrothal of the Archduchess to Emperor Napoleon. When Berthier, the wooer by proxy, reached the city on March 4th, he was received with acclamations. When the betrothal was publicly announced, and when in the official announcement were to be read the words, "Millions acclaim this great alliance, and in it the peoples of Europe will recognize a pledge of peace," all were satisfied. The festivities and merry-makings proper to the occasion removed the last traces of disquiet in Vienna.

On March 11, 1810, at half-past five in the evening, the provisional wedding of the imperial bride was effected by proxy in the Augustiner Church in Vienna. Marie Louise's uncle, Archduke Charles, acted as the proxy of Napoleon, whom he had so often met in battle, and who had not long before defeated him at Wagram.

The fates had spun their threads round the young Archduchess! Marie Louise's destiny was settled! Emperor Francis had sacrificed his daughter to policy! Perhaps he was not perfectly free from pangs of conscience, for two days after the wedding, he wrote to his son-in-law as follows: "Although the sacrifice I am making in parting from my daughter is a terrible one, and although at this moment my heart is bleeding at the loss of my beloved child, I have at least this consolation, that I am fully convinced of her happiness."

On the very day on which her father wrote these words, Marie Louise, in an unhappy frame of mind, set out on her journey to France, to that country with whose people she had no sympathy, and to the arms of a husband of whom down to the day of her betrothal she had never heard anyone say a good word—to a man whom in her innermost self she loathed. But as regards display, the wedding procession left nothing to be desired. Napoleon

himself had with the utmost care arranged all the details of the journey, which was a replica of that made by Marie Louise's unhappy aunt, Marie Antoinette. The young archduchess's father accompanied her as far as Enns, and took leave of her affectionately in Sankt-Pölten.

Braunau was the place where she bade farewell to her homeland. Here Marie Louise had to lay aside the Austrian garments which enveloped her person, and to clothe herself from head to foot in French vesture, prepared for her by the Parisian experts. For this ceremony, Napoleon had sent her a complete "golden toilette," as she reported to her father on March 16th. "He has not yet written to me," she added; "but since I have had to leave you, the sooner I am with him the better, for that will be much pleasanter than travelling with all these ladies."

In Braunau she had for the first time met her new sister-in-law, Queen Caroline of Naples, who was expected to be to her what the Princesse de Lamballe had been to Marie Antoinette. Her Austrian suite was replaced by a French royal household, and Napoleon had seen to it that with few exceptions this consisted of members of the old aristocracy. Count de Beauharnais was the chief gentleman of the household; the Duchess of Montebello, widow of Marshal Lannes, was chief maid of honour; and Prince Aldobrandini was master of the horse. Of the beautiful and virtuous Duchess of Montebello, Napoleon said: "In this lady I am sending the Empress a true maid of honour."

In later days, Marie Louise was much attached to the Duchess of Montebello, who became her intimate friend: but in Braunau all these faces were strange to her, and it seemed to her as if she would never be on easy terms with the scented French women. Many of the courtiers of the Austrian court shed tears when, for the last time, they kissed the hand of their young and inexperienced princess. Some of them had known Marie Antoinette, and the hearts of these were filled with gloomy forebodings. But Marie Louise was allowed to take with her her faithful stewardess Frau von Lažansky; and also her pet dog.

This was a consolation, but it was not of long duration. In Munich, Frau von Lažansky received orders to go back to Vienna, and the lap-dog shared the same fate.

The parting with the stewardess was a great grief to Marie Louise, but this separation was not the work of Napoleon. It had been ordered by Queen Caroline, who was eager to gain influence over her new sister-in-law. Still, what harm had the little dog done? Why was he not allowed to accompany his mistress any farther? Was anyone afraid lest this lap-dog might make a second scene à la Fortuné in the bedroom, when Napoleon came to share it with his newly wedded wife? Was the possible rival to be spirited out of the way betimes? Certainly Napoleon had had no thought of robbing Marie Louise of her little favourite, for he had secretly sent for some other pets of hers, two birds and a dog, which were to be a pleasant surprise for her when she reached Paris.

While the imperial bride was journeying westward, she was eagerly expected by her future husband in Paris. Napoleon was positively counting the hours until her arrival. He, who in general could think of nothing but his own journeys, his own work, his own affairs; he who was continually busied, and never had a moment to spare —could now think of nothing else than of getting the palaces ready for the reception of the young Empress, of looking at new furniture and patterns of stuff, of elaborating the ceremonial of the forthcoming festivities. He wanted all Europe to be given, in these marriage festivities an unprecedented display of wealth and glory.

He was perpetually thinking of Marie Louise, the girl of nineteen who was soon to be his. In fact he was genuinely in love with his young wife. He was continually asking the Austrians in his entourage, and anyone else who had been in Vienna, what Marie Louise was like. He wanted every possible detail concerning her appearance and her character. Again and again, he looked at her portrait, and asked those who knew her to tell him whether this or that feature in the picture was accurately portrayed. When he was told how youthfully fresh she was, how innocent, how inexperienced, how simple and

natural in her ways, he would rub his hands with delight, and seemed thoroughly satisfied with his lot. He positively radiated pride and ambition.

Everything which the most kindly consideration could dictate, was done by Napoleon for this young wife. A sense of delicacy made him remove from the walls of the palaces any pictures which recorded the victories of the French over the Austrians, for he knew that Marie Louise was devoted to her country. He had been careful to inform himself as to her habits and tastes; and in the furnishing of her rooms he had been sedulous to provide all that she was used to. He actually had a piece of embroidery, on which she had been at work before she left Vienna and to which she was very much attached, sent to Paris, so that the young Empress was not a little surprised and pleased when she found it awaiting her on her work-table.

The outfit which Napoleon had prepared for the Austrian Emperor's daughter exceeded anything that a princess could have dreamed of. Including the articles of adornment, the cost amounted to five million francs, which was an enormous sum in comparison with the bride's dowry, for that had been only five hundred thousand crowns.

But Napoleon's own person must be made to appear to young Marie Louise in the most favourable light, for to a girl of nineteen a man of one-and-forty was no longer young. Perhaps Marie Louise would consider him too old, and he therefore did everything he could to rejuvenate and beautify himself. He who had always been loath to take any trouble about his clothing or his footgear, had himself measured for fashionable coats, splendid boots, and buckled shoes. Though he had by now become fairly corpulent, he once more addressed himself to the art of dancing, for he had been told that Marie Louise, like all Austrian women, was passionately fond of waltzing. At all costs he wished to appear young in Marie Louise's eyes. In the hope of sweating off his fat, he took long rides and plenty of other exercise in the open air.

Meanwhile the bridal procession was drawing near to

the little towns of Soissons and Compiègne. Between them lay a wood. There Napoleon and Marie Louise were to have their first meeting, in a tent with gold and purple hangings. Since leaving Munich, the young Empress had daily received a letter from her betrothed. The gigantic "N" with which Napoleon signed his love letters was extremely characteristic of the ambition, and pride, and the satisfaction with which his mind was filled at this period. From Strasburg onwards, Marie Louise was further greeted every morning with fresh flowers from his hothouses, or with some game of his own shooting. He knew that the Archduchess loved flowers, and also that she was by no means averse to tasty food, and therefore he did whatever he could to satisfy both these inclinations.

Her bridegroom's attentions flattered Marie Louise. The unfavourable impresson she had secretly cherished of Napoleon, gradually became modified. The tender and ingratiating phrases which he artfully interwove in his letters pleased her. By degrees she became accustomed to receive such a token of his affection day by day; so that she was quite put out, one day, when the courier did not arrive at the usual time. "I have accommodated myself to my destiny," she wrote from Strasburg to her beloved father. "I am sure that I shall be happy. I wish you could read the letters that Emperor Napoleon writes me. He is overloading me with attentions."

She conscientiously answered every one of the Emperor's epistles, and Napoleon was often "overjoyed by her really long answers," as the trusty Mèneval reports. The last letter from his future wife was received by the Emperor when she had left Rheims, and was on the way to Soissons. Now there was nothing to keep him any longer at Compiègne, where he had been with his court since March 20th. The whole of his family was there except Prince Eugene and Queen Hortense, who were expected after Marie Louise's arrival at Compiègne. In this matter, Napoleon's delicacy was once more at work, for he fancied that the sight of Josephine's children might be distasteful to Marie Louise at the outset.

EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE
Engraving by Mécon, after Isabey

But of a sudden all the prescribed ceremonial, everything that had been carefully arranged with such incredible pains, was disregarded. What did Napoleon care about the prejudices of court society? He was not a born prince, and therefore had no use for all the externals which play so great a part in the life of one who is a monarch by descent, and in that of such a monarch's dependents. Above all, Napoleon was a man. It was as a man, and not as an emperor, that he wished to receive Marie Louise.

Accompanied only by his brother-in-law, Murat, wearing his famous grey cloak (for he had soon laid aside the new embroidered coat and put on his simple uniform again), on March 28th Napoleon drove to meet his bride, in a calash, with no armorial bearings. He had decided to take Marie Louise by surprise, to approach her carriage without being recognized, and, impersonating an imperial orderly, to hand her a letter.

In Courcelles, the two travellers sighted the first carriage of the bridal procession. The horses were being changed. Unnoticed, Napoleon and Murat took up a position near the church past which Marie Louise would have to drive. It was raining in torrents, but Napoleon was so impatient that he scarcely noticed the weather. He had not to wait long. When Marie Louise's carriage drew near, he strode to the door, and was just about to hand the young Empress the letter, when Monsieur d'Audenarde, the master of the horse, who naturally could not divine Napoleon's intention, recognized him. Audenarde pulled open the door of the carriage, and, to the astonished inmates, Marie Louise and Caroline, called out "His Majesty, the Emperor!" Thereupon Napoleon, wet through though he was, sat down beside his young wife, kissing her till she blushed all over.

The planned surprise had not come off. After the pair had looked at one another for a few moments, and when Marie Louise had recovered a little from her alarm, she opened the conversation saying: "Sire, your portrait does not flatter you." She certainly imagined that he would be more ill-favoured than he was. He seemed to

her not in the least like Marshal Berthier, although she had been told so. She was glad of this, for the Prince of Neuchâtel was not at all to her taste.

Napoleon, too, seemed to be agreeably surprised by Marie Louise's appearance. Certainly his expectations had not disappointed him. But Marie Louise was not beautiful. Anyone who looked at her full face could see the traces of smallpox; her lips were rather too thick; her blue eyes were perhaps too far apart, and somewhat too light in colour; and her tall figure was thought too buxom. Still, her whole appearance was extremely pleasing. The admirable freshness of youth made up for her defects. Her rosy cheeks; the abundance of her brown hair; her gentle and amiable smile—all these gave her somewhat coarse features considerable charm. Her feet and her arms were beautiful, her feet being so narrow and small that it was difficult to understand how they could carry her body. "The young Empress," said Metternich, "will certainly please in Paris by her goodness of heart, her extraordinary gentleness, and her simplicity. Though one would be rather inclined to call her ugly than beautiful, she has a very fine figure; and when she is well dressed and well set up, she will make a good showing."

But the people of Paris were not so easily satisfied as Metternich had expected. No doubt he had failed to take into consideration that Marie Louise was entering upon an inheritance which was not easy to manage. He forgot that as predecessor she had had a woman who was experienced in all the arts of coquetry and pleasing, and who neglected nothing that might win friends. Besides, Josephine had the wonderful charm of Creole women; and possessed amiability and flexibility of mind, in conjunction with a Frenchwoman's taste in dress, which had made her the darling of the populace. Marie Louise did not command any of these qualities. Madame Mère, in her memoirs, declares that her daughter-in-law was "inelegant, seen close at hand." Even Berthier, who did not grudge flattery to the Emperor, found it impossible to say that she was beautiful. But Marie Louise's intel-

ligence was not an ordinary one, and she was much better educated than Josephine. Though her training had been narrow, it had been exceedingly good. She was musical, was fond of art and literature, and seized every opportunity of improving her mind. She could speak German, Magyar, Czech, French, and English; and she had a smattering of Spanish, Italian, Latin, and even Turkish. She never knew what it was to be bored, for she could always find something to do. These qualities were crowned by her sincere religious sentiment, which inspired respect even in Napoleon; and by her extreme gentleness. Count Otto, French envoy in Munich, commended the Archduchess to the Emperor in the following words: "Gentleness, goodness of heart, a profound and religious sense of her duties, make her an example which is quoted all over the city."[5]

As Napoleon drove westward beside his young wife, he had for the time being eyes only for her external merits, and he seemed to be in a great hurry for the evening in Compiègne. There the palace had been made ready for the Empress, while for Napoleon, until April 1st, the day when the official wedding was to take place, the chancellery had been set aside as a dwelling. The prescribed ceremonial had been that Marie Louise was to sup at Soissons and spend the night there, but the Emperor overruled his own orders, and arranged that the carriage was to drive straight on to Compiègne. This place was reached at about ten in the evening, when it was still raining hard. The Emperor hastily introduced his young wife to the members of his family and the other dignitaries who were present. He would barely give the young girls of the town, who had come, bearing flowers to greet the new Empress, time to say their words of welcome; and he hastily made his way with Marie Louise into the inner rooms. The royal pair had not been expected till the following day, but a supper had been improvised—a supper for three only, Queen Caroline forming the third at the table.

During the meal, Marie Louise was extremely shy and

[5] Letter of March 10, 1810.

embarrassed; but this embarrassment, such as he had never seen in Josephine, endowed his new wife with a special charm in Napoleon's eyes. When he leaned towards her and spoke to her in a low tone, Marie Louise blushed again and again, or gave a naïve answer. When he asked her what her father had said before she left, she answered with innocent frankness: "He told me that I now belonged entirely to you, and was to do everything that you wanted."

By one in the morning all was quiet in the castle of Compiègne. The candles had been extinguished, the anterooms were empty, the carriages and the serving men had disappeared from the courtyard. As we have already learned, the Emperor, too, in accordance with the prescribed ceremonial, should have withdrawn as soon as supper was finished—but he remained. He had previously asked Cardinal Fesch whether the proxy marriage in Vienna had in very truth made him the Archduchess's husband. "Yes," replied Fesch. "By civil law, you are married to Archduchess Marie Louise." The cardinal did not guess why Napoleon had asked him this question. But the Emperor had quieted his own conscience, and could without any scruple stay in the palace.

Next morning, breakfast for two was served at the bedside of the young Empress. The whole day Napoleon was in cheerful mood. While he was dressing, he asked Constant, his valet, whether anyone had noticed how he had broken through the etiquette. He was overjoyed; was so happy that for Marie Louise's sake he dressed for dinner, putting on one of the embroidered frock-coats which King Murat's tailor had made for him. But this was the last occasion of the kind, for the next day Napoleon again wore his dark-grey uniform. His happiness also shines through the letter he wrote to his father-in-law under date March 29, 1810: "Your Majesty's daughter has been here for two days. She fulfils all my hopes, and we are continually giving one another proofs of the tender feelings that unite us. We suit one another admirably. I shall be her happiness; I have to thank Your Majesty for mine. Permit me to thank you for

this lovely gift, and to gladden your paternal heart in that I can assure you of the happiness of your beloved child!"

The public celebration of the civil marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise took place at Saint-Cloud on April 1st. Not until April 2nd, did the religious union take place, when Cardinal Fesch, as grand almoner, made the pair man and wife in the halls of the Louvre. This was the day on which the new Empress made her entry into the French capital.

The Parisians had never seen so splendid a display. The court ladies wore the most costly dresses and jewels. Marie Louise appeared in a robe of silver tulle, ornamented with precious stones, and was literally sprinkled with diamonds. The wedding dress alone cost twelve thousand francs.

It seemed as if the weather, too, wished to participate in the festival. Although the night had been stormy, by noon the sun was shining brightly on the wedding procession for the drive from Saint-Cloud to Paris. The inhabitants of the city were in festal mood—as happy and proud as Napoleon himself, who was overjoyed now that he could hold the daughter of the Caesars in his arms. To him, Marie Louise was the bringer of good fortune, and the woman who would give the country an heir to the throne. The Parisians were ready to throw themselves at her feet. But her invincible shyness, which might be an advantage in private life, was a drawback on public occasions. People were apt to ascribe to pride that which was nothing more than timid reserve. She did not understand, as Josephine had understood, how to smile and bow pleasantly as she drove past the cheering crowds. She had no talent for hiding her moods, her whims, and her distresses, but gave frank expression to her feelings. If she was tired, if these formalities (which in the bottom of her heart she hated) made her head ache, she said as much, and withdrew, with small regard for the public that was eagerly waiting for a sight of her. Josephine would rather have died than have allowed the common folk to learn anything of her private feelings when she

was called upon to appear in public. She had a kindly word, an agreeable smile, a friendly glance, for everyone. Marie Louise could never find anything to say on these occasions; or if she did say a word or two, her phrasing was timid and maladroit, although she could speak French as well as her mother tongue.

Nevertheless Marie Louise was able to dò something which Josephine had never succeeded in doing. To begin with, at any rate, she won the hearts of the members of her husband's family. This was a great delight to Napoleon. He had long desired a tranquil and happy family life, without any quarrels. He respected Marie Louise more than ever when he found that she was on good terms with his kindred. True, that in days to come she, too, was to learn that it was not always easy to remain on a pleasant footing with her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Napoleon seemed to have rediscovered all the happiness of early days. He surrounded his wife with attentions. Literally, he was in love with her, and could think of nothing but her.

He re-arranged his whole manner of life to suit her wishes and showered presents upon her. Had Marie Louise been a different sort of woman, she might perhaps have gained much more influence over Napoleon than Josephine had ever been able to. Metternich was aware of this when he wrote to Emperor Francis under date of April 16, 1810, saying: "Napoleon has perhaps more weaknesses than many another man; and if the Empress continues to turn these to account in the way she seems already to recognize as necessary, she may do good service to herself and to the whole of Europe." But Marie Louise was too inexperienced in these matters, and perhaps she was not unselfish enough. She had little concern about the welfare of others. Her chief interest in life was her own well-being, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of her own happiness.

The first months of Napoleon's second marriage were passed wholly in his wife's company. He took his meals with her, though he had long since ceased to do this in

Josephine's case. He went out riding with his young wife, accompanied her on her walks, played billiards with her—in a word, did his utmost to amuse her. Though it had been his way never to spend more than twenty minutes over a meal, he now waited patiently till Marie Louise had finished her dinner; and, since she was a good trencherwoman, this sometimes meant a considerable time. Often he would stay in her room when she was dressing, and interest himself in the minutest details of her coiffure and her toilet, making jokes now and again, pinching her plump bare arms or her red cheeks, and calling her "grosse bête" if she became annoyed with him.

He never lost his temper with Marie Louise, never stormed at her, and was never capricious to her. He never had any scenes with her such as he sometimes had had with Josephine. In fact, he appeared to be delighted with the society of his young wife, and really seemed, as Queen Catherine of Westphalia wrote to her father, King of Würtenburg, "to wish to give peace to the world and to give his whole time to Zaïre." He was proud to be able to show off this Emperor's daughter to his subjects, and all the world was agreed that he must be very happy. The Duke of Cadore called him the best husband in the world, saying that it was impossible that anyone could take more care of his wife, or could pay her more attention than Napoleon did to Marie Louise. Even Fouché, the Minister of Police, admits that the Emperor was always extremely kind to his second wife. In this matter, Madame Durand, Madame de Rémusat, Monsieur Caulaincourt, Prince Metternich, Prince Schwarzenberg, Baron de Méneval, the Duchess of Abrantes, and Constant, the valet, give similar testimony.

How good an impression the youthful Marie Louise had made on Napoleon can be gathered from the words he frequently uttered to the members of his entourage. For instance: "Marry a German woman; they are gentle, good-natured, unspoiled, and fresh as roses." To Chaptal, he once said: "If France knew all this woman's virtues, it would be on its knees before her."

His happiness reached its climax when, three months after her arrival, Marie Louise found that she was with child. At length, Napoleon's wish for a legitimate heir was to be gratified; the longing that had obsessed him for fourteen years was to find satisfaction. Thenceforward his consideration, his affection, his tenderness, for the young Empress were redoubled. "Napoleon," writes Metternich, "is in an almost indescribable state of jubilation."

He was, indeed, extremely happy, and showed this to Marie Louise in every possible way. In fact, his care for her became in many respects exaggerated into a jealous watching over her person. Such, at least, was the view taken by some of those in close contact with the Empress. But with this matter I have already dealt in the introduction, where I explained that Napoleon's watchfulness in this case was not the expression of ordinary jealousy. He did not wish the slightest glimmer of suspicion to rest upon the Empress, the mother of his children. "I respect and honour the Empress," he said one day to a lady-in-waiting who had for a moment absented herself from the room where the elderly Paër was giving Marie her music lesson; "but the ruler of a great realm must avoid even the semblance of suspicion." For the same reason, he wrote from Hanau, in 1813, to his wife when he learned that she had received the Arch-chancellor Cambacérès while she was still in bed: "It is my wish that under no circumstances and on no pretext you shall ever receive anyone, no matter whom, when you are in bed. Such a thing can only be permitted to women who are over thirty."

Had this strict supervision been the outcome of jealousy, it must have been preceded by passion and love. But Napoleon did not love Marie Louise to the pitch of jealousy. His fondness for her was a tranquil and bourgeois conjugal affection, far removed from the ardent passion the young general had felt for Josephine, or the sentimental fondness which had inspired the Emperor in his relationships with Marie Walewska. At first Marie Louise's fresh youth had stimulated his senses; later it

was the qualities which were so appropriate to the wishes of a man like Napoleon which attracted him and made him prize his wife. Her thriftiness, her sense of order—virtues which Josephine had lacked—delighted him. Her dress allowance was five hundred thousand francs a year but she never spent the whole sum. Still, the less she asked for, the more did Napoleon give her. He often surprised her by presenting her with a dress, a trinket, or some other gawd, which she had refused to buy for herself in the belief that she could not afford it. She never ran into debt.

To sum up, Marie Louise was all that Napoleon had wanted his wife to be. Her gentleness and her simplicity made her dearer to him day by day. She was not a woman of independent mind or strong character, but always needed some one on whom she could lean. Napoleon's strong arm was a welcome support to her. His will was hers, just as in former days in Vienna her father's will had been hers; and she really never noticed that Napoleon held sway over her. Nevertheless, he sometimes yielded to her little caprices (if we may call habits, caprices). We know how fond he was of warmth, and how much he liked a fire in his bedroom, so that he could watch the flicker of the flames. But Marie Louise was accustomed to sleep in an unwarmed room, and Napoleon gave way to her wishes in this matter. She, who had regarded herself as a victim, who had wept bitter tears at the prospect of her marriage, was perfectly happy with the hereditary enemy of her country and her family. A very few days after her first meeting with Napoleon, she wrote to her father: "He loves me heartily. I am very grateful to him, and cordially return his love. The more I know him, the better I like him. There is about him something attractive, which is practically irresistible. I am sure that I shall live with him in perfect satisfaction."

She really did live with Napoleon in perfect "satisfaction." She had found him altogether different from what her fancy had pictured. Towards her, he was neither brutal nor ruthless, neither ill-tempered nor despotic, but

always kindly and gentle. To her relatives, to Metternich, and to Schwarzenberg, Marie Louise could not say enough to show how happy she was in her marriage; could not say enough to describe the happiness which, for her likewise, attained its climax when the hour drew near in which she was to become a mother.

II

On the evening of March 19, 1811, after the Empress had been for a short walk with Napoleon on the terrace of the Tuileries she noticed the first signs of the on-coming of labour. That evening there was to be a reception and a dramatic performance in her apartments, in honour of her uncle, the Grand Duke of Würzburg, who had been in Paris since the sixteenth. The first guests had already arrived in their court dress. The company had to be politely dismissed, for Marie Louise was compelled to retire to bed. But the courtiers remained assembled in the rooms on the ground floor.

The labour pains continued throughout the night. Soon the population of Paris was informed regarding the imminence of the happy event. In all the churches, prayers were offered up for the Empress's safe delivery. Napoleon had beforehand warned the bishops to instruct the priests that the customary phrase of petition on behalf of women in labour, "pro laborantibus in partu," was to be changed into "pro regina praegnante."

Towards morning, the entrances to the palace, and the gardens in front of it, were thronged by a crowd of persons who waited in silent anxiety. They wished to get first-hand information regarding the event which was to shake the whole world. Everyone knew that a salute of a hundred-and-one guns would announce the birth of a prince, while only twenty-one shots would be fired if the child were a girl. Everyone wanted to be the first to hear the joyful announcement. But no announcement came. Hour succeeded hour, and many began to entertain the most gloomy thoughts.

Within the palace, the young Empress lay on her bed of pain. Towards morning, the progress of the labour

had been arrested, and Marie Louise had gone to sleep. The accoucheurs were of opinion that the delivery might still be long deferred. The Emperor therefore sent some of the courtiers home, retaining only the chief maid of honour, Madame de Montebello, the ladies-in-waiting, Luçay, Durand, and Ballant, and two or three other women attendants, who, with Dr. Dubois, remained in the Empress's bedroom. Napoleon, who had spent the whole night by his wife's bedside, doing his best to comfort her, and showing great tenderness, was tired out. When he saw that Marie Louise had fallen asleep, he went away to seek refreshment in a hot bath.

At eight in the morning, Dubois came to report to the Emperor, who was still in his bath. The doctor looked extremely anxious, and was of opinion that it would be impossible to deliver the child without the use of forceps. Indeed, it was doubtful, he said, whether the lives of both mother and child could be saved. Napoleon did not hesitate long about his answer. The husband's voice spoke, instead of the Emperor's. "Do your utmost to save the mother!" said he. "Do exactly what you would do if you were attending an ordinary citizen's wife." Then he called Constant to dry him and help him to dress, and hastened to Marie Louise.

As soon as the Emperor had arrived, Dubois set himself to begin the operation, while the physicians, Corvisart, Yvan, and Bourdier, held the Empress. When she caught sight of the forceps, she screamed loudly, exclaiming, "I am to be sacrificed because I am an Empress!" But Napoleon spoke to her consolingly, and took her hand tenderly in his, while Dubois proceeded to deliver the child. Marie Louise screamed horribly. Her cries racked Napoleon's heart. His face was as white as marble; the wings of his nostrils were quivering with excitement, and the tears started to his eyes when he saw his wife's suffering. In the end he found it impossible to endure the sight of these torments any longer, and he withdrew into the Empress's dressing-room. The man who had seen death in its most terrible forms thousands upon thousands of times, the man who had without blinking

been responsible for the most horrible incidents of warfare, this man now trembled when he saw a young woman, his wife, contorted by pain. From minute to minute, he asked how the patient was getting on.

At length, after nearly half an hour, at twenty minutes past nine in the morning, the delivery was effected. Napoleon hastened back to his wife's bedside, and tenderly kissed her pale lips. Not until he was fully satisfied that she was safe, did he trouble to look at the child whose birth had caused the mother so much anguish. Yes, it was a boy! But the happiness which Napoleon believed himself to have grasped seemed about to escape him after all. The little creature was lying on the carpet, apparently lifeless. Napoleon believed the child to be dead, and without wasting words, he turned back to the Empress.

Meanwhile, however, his body physican, Corvisart, was busied over the newborn infant. After several minutes' slapping and rubbing with warm cloths, and after the administration of a few drops of brandy, the child revived, and cried lustily.

His son's first cry tore Napoleon from Marie Louise's arms. He kissed the boy. Tears of joy ran down over his cheeks when he held this precious gift, the greatest of all the gifts of fortune, in his arms. Then he left the Empress's bedroom for a little while, to attend to the last details of a toilet made in a great hurry. When he returned, he was beaming with joy. To those around, he said with manifest pride: "It seems to me, gentlemen, that we have got a vigorous youngster. He needed some asking before he would come into the world, but here he is at last! Still," he added, his thoughts flying to the Empress, "how terribly this poor woman has had to suffer! I don't want any more children at such a cost."

The crowd in front of the palace, which had been counting the gunshots, was wild with exultation. Until after the twenty-first shot, a deathly stillness had prevailed. Most people were holding their breath, so that there was nothing to be heard but the counting aloud of some of those present. When, at length, the twenty-second shot thundered, there were endless shouts of delight, and a

thousand voices roared: "Vive l'Empereur! Vive le roi de Rome!" The same shouts spread from street to street all over Paris. France had an heir to the throne!

From behind the curtains in the Empress's bedroom, Napoleon looked down upon the rejoicings of his people. He no longer tried to restrain his tears, which ran down over his cheeks. His happiness was complete; but throughout the day his eyes were moist, with the last tears of joy he ever shed.

At length the long-desired heir, his legitimate son, had been born! While still in the cradle, in addition to the names Napoleon Francis Charles Joseph, the baby received the high-sounding title of King of Rome. Who could then have foretold that this emperor's son, this born king, who seemed destined to reign over two realms, was to die one and twenty years later as simple Duke of Reichstadt, ending without glory and without power a life begun under such brilliant auspices. "His birth and his death—these two words contain all his history!"

But those gloomy days were still distant. Napoleon had not a shadow of doubt as to his own good fortune, which had already brought him such wonderful things. The future belonged to him. If Victor Hugo had then been able to apostrophize him thus,

> L'avenir, l'avenir, mystère—
> Toutes les choses de la terre,
> Gloire, fortune militaire,
> Couronne éclatante des rois,
> Victoires aux ailes embrassées,
> Ambitions réalisées,
> Ne sont jamais sur nous posées
> Que comme l'oiseau sur nos toits!

Napoleon would certainly not have been able to understand the words.

Festival after festival followed to celebrate the happy event. Never had the Paris of the old kings of France seen such a display on similar occasions. Napoleon's pride made him eager to show as soon as possible to his people the wife who had presented him with an heir. She had scarcely risen from her lying-in couch, when he took her upon a journey to Normandy. In the most literal sense of the word, it was a triumphant progress for Marie

Louise as well as for himself. Not until after this journey, on June 9th, was the heir to the throne baptized in the cathedral of Notre Dame. When the choir intoned the *Veni Creator,* Napoleon took his son in his arms, and, radiant with happiness, showed the boy to those present. Shouts of applause were raised on all hands, the congregation forgetting that they were in a consecrated building. The walls of Notre Dame were shaken by the voices of the thousands who joined in shouting "Vive l'Empereur!"

As far as Marie Louise was concerned, however, the birth of the child meant that she was to take a second place in Napoleon's thoughts. Thenceforward, there was no longer to be any intimate companionship between the pair. The Emperor resumed his old habits. He merely supped with the Empress, and devoted himself to his work with redoubled energies. Even his leisure was not for Marie Louise alone. She had to share this privilege with her son, whom Napoleon idolized.

The little King of Rome proved a pretty and healthy boy, who was, none the less, more like his mother than his father. In the child's company, Napoleon himself became a child, his greatest pleasure being to play with the infant. When his son was with him he forgot all else; his dignity, his power, his work. Then he was only a father, and the little king was his son. No matter how busy he might be, when Marie Louise, carrying the child in her arms, appeared in his study, he would put everything aside; or else, continuing his work, he would take his beloved child on his knees. The little one was overwhelmed with tender attentions. Impetuously Napoleon would seize him, throwing him up in the air and catching him again, until the little boy either screamed with laughter or cried out in alarm, according to his mood, what time Marie Louise looked on in alarm, wondering that her husband could play so recklessly with this fragile little creature. Another time Napoleon would stand in front of the mirror with his son, making faces to amuse the child. But this proved alarming, and the little Napoleon began to cry. His father regarded him, half seriously

and half in jest, saying: "What, Sire, you are crying! Fie, for shame, a king ought never to cry!" and then he turned to thinking of some fresh amusement.

When little Napoleon was somewhat older, he no longer cried, but crowed with delight at the luncheon table when the Emperor—to whom the governess, Madame de Montesquiou, had to bring the child daily—would smear the little one's face with gravy, and play all sorts of other tricks. Sometimes he would put his own hat on the boy's head, or buckle his sword round the child. Or, going on all fours, he would take young Napoleon on his back and scramble round the room on all fours. "Napoleon's patience with this boy," says Méneval, "was inexhaustible."

He was as keenly interested in his boy's pleasures and pains as any mother could have been. Every day he must have a careful report; and when he was away from Paris, Madame de Montesquiou had to write these reports. Only such a man as Napoleon would have found time, amid all the business of a campaign, amid all the pressure of work involved by the command of a great army, to ask his son's governess whether the last four teeth had been cut.[6] Marie Louise, too, had to send him detailed reports about the little King of Rome. The boy grew very fond of his father, with whom he had such fine games. As soon as he could speak he would gravely address Napoleon as "mon papa l'empereur," describing himself as "le petit roi de Rome"—phrases which greatly amused Napoleon.

Thus did the year 1811 pass amid family happiness. But when 1812 opened, the clouds of war were already thickening in the north. A campaign into the snowy plains of Russia had become inevitable for the Emperor of the French. Full of hope and confidence, he set out on this adventure on a lovely May morning in the year 1812, accompanied by the Empress. Before actually beginning the war, he wished to assemble all the kings and princes and all his Austrian relatives around him in Dresden, in order to show them that his marriage with

[6] Letter to Madame de Montesquiou under date June 16, 1812.

an empress's daughter had made him completely one of their fellowship—no longer only as a political sovereign, but as their equal, a prince among princes.

For Marie Louise, the days at Dresden were among the most delightful of her married life. It was not only that she was almost always in her husband's company. In addition, her beloved father and mother were there. The father and mother found their daughter much changed. The simple little archduchess had become a mighty empress, who appeared before them blazing with diamonds. The splendour of her dresses attracted much notice, and certainly aroused the envy of the other princesses. Not even Napoleon's sisters, the queens of fashion, could rival her. Napoleon beamed with gratified ambition and with happiness when, Marie Louise at his side, he made his rounds in the drawing-rooms of Dresden Palace, where all the kings and princes reverently watched his progress or listened to his words. He was, in very truth, the king of kings!

But alas these happy days were soon to end. The hour of parting struck. Marie Louise, who had scarcely ever gone out in Dresden, since she did not wish to lose a moment of Napoleon's company, sobbed bitterly when he left her on May 26th. She had got so used to being with him that she dreaded even the briefest separation. Much more, then, was she afraid now, when the parting was likely to be a long one. Without him, without his constant care, without his strong protection, she felt utterly forsaken. "You know me well enough," she wrote at this time to Madame de Luçay, "to be able to realize how unhappy and melancholy I am. I try to console myself, but I shall remain unhappy until I see him again!"

Her only consolation was his letters, which showed his fondness for her. It is true that they did not glow with the passion he had felt for Josephine in the days of his Italian victories. But Marie Louise was perfectly satisfied when he wrote to her: "You know that I long for you just as you long for me; that I should like to be able to tell you all that I feel for you. Farewell, mon amie. Wholly yours."

This was written to her when he was leaving the

THE KING OF ROME
After a painting by Gérard

smoking ruins of Moscow, the old tsarist capital. Two months later, assailed by the elements, he drove into Paris unostentatiously, accompanied only by the faithful Caulaincourt. Thus unexpectedly did he return to Marie Louise from that great campaign upon which he had set out so confidently with the Grand Army. It was but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.

The rock was shattered, the granite was fissured, Malet's attempted rising must have shown him that his power was on the wane; but his warrior spirit was not broken. A new and fine army grew out of the earth as if by magic; and with this, in the spring of 1813, Napoleon set out for new battles in Germany.

Marie Louise was again left alone. On March 30th, the Emperor had appointed her regent, with a civil list of four million francs—an honour he had never accorded to Empress Josephine. The cares of the realm now rested upon Marie Louise's young shoulders. As chief adviser, she had the Duke of Parma, Arch-chancellor Cambacérès, through whose hands everything passed. Napoleon had expressly commissioned him to keep from the young Empress the seamy side of governmental affairs. Especially did this apply to the police reports, for Marie Louise's purity must not be soiled by contact with the hateful and base elements of human life. "There are some things which must never be allowed to taint the mind of a young woman," wrote Napoleon to the Arch-chancellor.

Marie Louise fulfilled her duties to her husband's great satisfaction, as Napoleon more than once took the trouble to tell his father-in-law. In order to make the separation easier for her, he arranged for her to visit Mainz on July 26th, where he came to meet her, and spent several days with her. Talking to Cambacérès before this reunion, he spoke of the assignation like a happy youth who is about to see his beloved again. He was perfectly cheerful, and the lines of age vanished from his forehead when he spoke of his being able ere long to embrace his wife and son once more. When he had seen Marie Louise at Mainz, he returned to Dresden animated with fresh courage.

He returned from this campaign in the autumn of the

same year—defeated, betrayed by his wife's father, but still defending himself like a wounded lion. His meeting with his wife and child was touching. Napoleon warmly embraced Marie Louise, and kissed the little boy with all the love of a happy father. He did not wound her by saying bitter things about Emperor Francis.

Napoleon could only enjoy three months' rest in the family circle. The allies crossed the French frontiers. Once more he had to take up arms, fighting this time on his own territories and against his own father-in-law. To Marie Louise these were terrible blows. Napoleon's first thought was to provide for the safety of his wife and his son. To whom could he more confidently entrust them than to the National Guard? On January 22, 1814, before taking the field once more, he summoned the officers of the National Guard to the Tuileries, and commended the Empress and the boy to their care. It was a solemn moment when Napoleon said: "I entrust to you the dearest of my possessions: the Empress, my wife; and the King of Rome, my son! You will take care of them, will you not?" he said several times. For answer came a hearty shout from the mouths of all these valiant men: "Vive l'Empereur!" Napoleon then kissed his son, and the eyes of many of those present were moist. Two days later, after burning many of his most important papers, at three in the morning the Emperor took leave of wife and child. He was never to see little Napoleon or Marie Louise again!

While in this campaign Napoleon excelled himself, while his energy and his bravery were almost miraculous, and while he was once again the General Bonaparte of 1797, his destiny worked itself out in Paris. The enemy was before the gates of the town in which Marie Louise and his son were staying. As late as February 8th, he had written to Joseph: "As long as I live, Paris will not be invested by the enemy!" And he had at the same time handed over his wife and child to his brother's care. "As long as I live" he added, "I must be obeyed, and I do not doubt that I shall be. But if I die, my son and the Empress must not fall into the hands of the enemy, but must, for the honour of France withdraw with their last sol-

diers into the remotest village. Remember the wife of Philip V! What would people think of the Empress? They would say that she had sacrificed her son's throne and mine! The allies would be delighted to take her prisoner and carry her off to Vienna. . . . If the Empress and the King of Rome should fall into the hands of the enemy, . . . you and all the others despite your asseverations would be rebels!

"I would rather my son should be assassinated than see him grow up in Vienna as an Austrian prince. . . . I have never been able to witness the performance of *Andromache* without commiserating the fate of Astyanax; and I have always considered him fortunate in failing to survive his father." On March 16th, he wrote once more to Joseph in the same strain: "If the enemy draws near to Paris in such force that defence seems out of the question, then see to it that the Regent and my son, the great dignitaries, the ministers of State, the members of the Senate, the presidents of the Council of State, the great officers of the crown, Baron de la Bouillerie, and the State treasure, are removed in the direction of the Loire. Do not leave my son, and never forget that I would rather know him to be in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France. The fate of Astyanax as prisoner of the Greeks has always seemed to me the most unhappy fate recorded in history."

Nevertheless, such was to be the fate of Napoleon's son. On hearing to the above effect from the Emperor, King Joseph and Talleyrand decided that Marie Louise and the little King of Rome should leave Paris. The Empress was unable to come to any decision on her own account. The most conflicting thoughts were at war within her mind. On the one hand, she brooded over her father, her home, and the memories of her youth; on the other, she thought of Napoleon, her son, Paris, her position as Empress, and the love she was expected to feel for the country where she had reigned for barely four years. Joseph and Talleyrand urged her to set out; but the officers of the National Guard, who had promised the Emperor to keep watch over his son and his wife, implored her not to leave Paris, telling her that only her presence

could make the defence of the city possible. But Marie Louise was not a strong character, and she allowed herself to be guided by her nearest advisers. Her departure from Paris took place at noon on March 26th. The Empress of the French left the city to its fate.

A remarkable thing happened just before they got into the carriage with the little King of Rome. He did not wish to leave the Tuileries, but stamped on the floor, and screamed: "Don't go to Rambouillet, Mamma, it is a horrid place. Let's stay here!" He defended himself with all the strength of his little hands and feet when M. de Canisy wanted to carry him to the carriage. Red with fury, he cried out: "I won't go! I will not leave my house; I will not go away! Since Papa is not here, I am master!"

How different was Marie Louise's departure from her arrival. The arrival had been so brilliant. Now there were no farewell greetings, and Paris shed no tears over the wife and the son of the Emperor! She went first to Rambouillet, and thence to Blois. Here she received the overwhelmingly disastrous news of her husband's abdication. Never had this weak woman been unhappier and more to be pitied than now. Never had she shed more tears; never had she been so full of despair. Still, in her justification it must be pleaded that it was not until she had received a letter from Napoleon advising her to put all her trust in her father, that she decided to throw herself upon Francis's protection. Her first thought had been to hasten to her husband, to await the progress of events at his side, and to share his misfortunes. Her father's will, which was equivalent to the policy of the allies, decided otherwise. The young, the inexperienced, the weak Marie Louise, who, with her son, was now completely forsaken, believed that the wisest thing she could do was to trust in her father. She was confident that he would do what was best for her and her son. She therefore allowed herself to be persuaded, in the conviction that she would only be separated from her husband for a time. The final decision was taken after her meeting with her father at Fontainebleau on April 16th. Filial love gained the victory over her love for Napoleon. With a

cry of despair, Marie Louise threw herself into the arms of Emperor Francis, of whom the little King of Rome, with the pitiless criticism of a child, said afterwards to Madame de Montesquiou: "I have seen the Emperor of Austria. He is ugly."

Marie Louise was not like the Queen of Westphalia, Jerome's wife, who, when her father asked her to separate from her dethroned husband, replied: "Against my will, you involved me in his destiny when he was powerful and happy. To-day, when disaster has overtaken him, I am not inclined to play a coward's part and desert him." Nor had Marie Louise the vigorous character of her grandmother, Queen Maria Caroline of Naples and Sicily. She, although she was an enemy of Napoleon, would have liked her granddaughter to twist a rope out of sheets and let herself down from the window that she might run away to her husband. Marie Louise had no thought of doing anything of the kind.

Under her father's protection she travelled from Switzerland to Vienna, while the dethroned Emperor was journeying to Elba. Until the last moment he had hoped to see his wife and child again. He had definitely believed that Francis would not keep them away from their husband and father, since they had nothing to do with politics. But at length he had been forced to realize that he was to remain solitary, and thereupon, in a weak moment, he was overwhelmed by despair. During that dreadful night in which Walewska, the truest friend he had in the world, was vainly waiting in the ante-room in the hope of a word of farewell, Napoleon took poison. But death would not receive him. He was to drain the cup of sorrows to the dregs.

Subsequently, a little hope re-entered Napoleon's heart. Further reflection had tranquillized him as to his fate. Dr. Corvisart had told him that the climate of Elba would not at present be suitable for Marie Louise. She had better take the waters at Aix for a time, and could subsequently join him on the island. It was in this anticipation alone that Napoleon had allowed his wife and child to set out for Vienna, and had entrusted them to the care

of Emperor Francis. As soon as he had reached Elba, he busied himself to find the most healthful spot on the island for the Empress's residence, and fixed upon San Martino, in the confident belief that she would come. Had she not written to tell him so? As late as July 31, 1814, she assured him that although she must at first go from Aix to Vienna, since her father wished it, she would soon join her husband. The letter ended with assurances of her affection. That was the last word that Napoleon ever received from his wife. Racked with anxiety he wrote to her again and again, but none of his letters were answered. General Neipperg saw to it that Napoleon's letters to Marie Louise were handed unopened to Emperor Francis. The banished Emperor did everything he could get news of his wife and child. At length he applied to Marie Louise's uncle, Grand Duke Frederick Joseph of Tuscany.

"Brother and dear uncle," he wrote under date October 10, 1814, "having had no news from my wife since August 10th, and no news about my son for six months, I entrust this letter to you to Cavaliere Colonna. I beg Your Royal Highness to let me know whether you will be good enough to allow me to send you every week a letter to the Empress, and also whether you will give me news about her, and whether you will forward me the letters of Madame de Montesquiou, my son's governess? I trust that, despite the events which have brought about so many changes, Your Royal Highness still preserves a little friendship for me. I shall be fully consoled by this assurance."

Napoleon, whom an emperor and kings had once sued for favours, crowns, and territories, had now to implore a petty prince to let him have a word of news about his wife and child. But this Grand Duke was not even a magnanimous enemy. He vouchsafed no answer to the letter of the sometime Emperor of the French. It was nothing to him how much Napoleon's fatherly heart might be suffering under the separation. There was no doubt about the suffering. Many of the exile's com-

panions in the island of Elba saw him standing in tears before the picture of his fair-haired child.

But gradually Napoleon accommodated himself to his fate. Perhaps he entertained secret hopes of seeing his wife and his son again in France. Should he sit once more upon the throne of France, should he again concentrate all power into his hands, no doubt Marie Louise would return to him, in order to get back for the King of Rome the throne which his father would have reconquered! But Napoleon deceived himself. Marie Louise would not come back. She did not listen to his summons, when, on March 27, 1815, he wrote to her: "I am master of the whole of France! . . . I expect you here in April with my son!" Even this last summons remained unanswered. Madame Duchâtel, Countess Walewska, Madame Pellaprat, and many another woman who had once been on intimate terms with Napoleon, had come to show her loyalty to the returned Emperor, to her sometime friend and lover. One only, his son's mother, held aloof. She was out walking by herself when General Neipperg, who was high in her good graces, came to tell her the news of her husband's return to France. Thereupon, she promptly threw herself on the protection of the allies, and thus destroyed Napoleon's last hope of seeing her and his son again. She was no longer Empress of the French! In June 1815, she was given a new title, that of Duchess of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla, and had to pledge herself never to write a line to Napoleon. Also she had to agree to leave her son in Vienna. She made no objection to these stipulations. Once more the Emperor had been forsaken. He had been deprived of the heir to his throne, the supporter of his dynasty! This son, for whose coming he had yearned, was no longer his son! Soon too, his throne was taken from him for the second time, and nothing was left to the great Emperor of the French but his prison house on the barren rock lashed by the waves of the Atlantic.

On this rocky island, the prisoner cherished faithful remembrances of the wife who had soon forgotten him, and of the son who in Schönbrunn was still keenly interested

in his father's fate. Just as throughout his married life with Marie Louise, Napoleon had always been considerate, tender, and loving, so now did these feelings for her find expression in his words. No bitter, angry, or contemptuous expressions ever passed his lips where she was concerned. He forgave her everything, and was confident that she would remain faithful to him to the day of his death. The poor man did not know that Marie Louise had long since entered into a morganatic union with General Neipperg, and had already borne her new husband several children. At the very time when she was again about to become a mother, shortly before Napoleon's death in the spring of 1821, he said to General Bertrand (when already suffering the unspeakable agonies of his last illness), "You may be sure that if the Empress neither does nor tries to do anything to mitigate my sorrows, this is only because she is surrounded by spies, who prevent her learning about my troubles—for Marie Louise is the soul of virtue." But Marie Louise knew all about Napoleon's fate. She knew how much he suffered in St. Helena; she knew how terrible had been his last illness, for when she heard of his death she wrote to her friend, Madame de Crenneville née de Poutét: "I must admit that this news has surprised me very much. Although I never had any sort of deep feeling for him, I cannot forget that he is the father of my boy, and that, far from treating me badly (as the world believes), he was always extremely considerate towards me." A little later she wrote to the same correspondent: "This death, which clears all scores, brings pain with it, especially when I recall what dreadful torments he must have endured in recent years."

Napoleon's last legacy to his wife was his heart, which was to be sent to her in a capsule. Alas, he did not know that Marie Louise had long since forgotten this heart in her fondness for another.[7]

[7]After Neipperg's death on February 22, 1829 (she had been married to him morganatically for seven years), Marie Louise married again on February 17, 1834—a secret marriage on this occasion likewise. Neipperg's successor was Count Charles René de Bombelles.

WOMEN OF LETTERS AT NAPOLEON'S COURT

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LAURA JUNOT, DUCHESS OF ABRANTES

One of the prettiest and most talented women at the court of the First Consul and the Emperor was General Junot's wife. Furthermore, she was one of the few women who had an intimate acquaintance with the rise of Bonaparte, for she had known him from earliest childhood. She had seen him in the struggle for existence when he was poor, could pull no strings, and was knocking vainly at all the doors in Paris; when, wearing a threadbare uniform and badly cleaned boots, unkempt and disorderly in aspect, he had nothing else in his mind than an attempt to improve the lot of his family and to secure his own future. She had witnessed his growth towards greatness from hour to hour; and, during his rise, some of the radiance had lit up her own personality, when, as wife of the governor of the city, she had been one of the most important hostesses of the French Capital. Then, this man, who had once been glad to take his meals in her mother's house because he lacked money to pay for them at a restaurant, made her Duchess of Abrantes. Perhaps she had dreamed of becoming a queen. For, in fact, she herself came from a ruling house, being the daughter of that Panoria Permon, whose hand Napoleon had once sought when, at the age of twenty-six, he was on the look-out for a home of his own. But his suit had been rejected.

The Permons, especially Madame Permon, had for a long time been on friendly terms with the Bonaparte family. They, too, were Corsicans. Panoria had sprung from the Greek imperial family of the Comneni, who in the seventeenth century had taken refuge in Corsica with a few trusty followers. Subsequently Panoria, accompanying her husband Monsieur de Permon (at one time a trader in a small way of business, then enriched by speculations in America, and at length a wealthy army contrac-

tor), she removed to Montpellier. There she kept open house, living rather extravagantly. A welcome guest was Napoleon's father, when, in the year 1785, travelling in France, he first became affected with the terrible disease from which he was to die ere long.

After the Reign of Terror, the Permons went to Paris. But the revolution had ruined them, and M. de Permon was unable to make another successful start. When he died, the day after the Thirteenth Vendémiaire, he had nothing but debts to bequeath his widow and his three children—one son and two daughters. When the Permons had first come to Paris, and had taken up their residence in the Hôtel de la Tranquilleté, Rues des Filles-Saint-Thomas, they resumed their acquaintanceship with young Napoleon Bonaparte, who, although he was already a general, had no commission at the time. He came to see them daily, accompanied by his friend and countryman, Saliceti, taking his meals with the family, and glad, no doubt, to talk to Panoria about his homeland, his beautiful Corsica.

At this time Laura Permon, in later days Duchess of Abrantes, was eleven years old. She did not fail to notice how remarkable was the aspect of General Bonaparte, laconic and almost always gloomy; and the portrait which subsequently, in her memoirs, she gave of him is one of the best descriptions we have of the General of the Thirteenth Vendémiaire. As everyone knows, in those days he was anything but handsome. Not until he was a good deal older, when his face had filled out, did his features come to resemble those of the best-looking of the Caesars. "But his glance and his smile," said Madame Junot, "were always remarkable. . . . His way of doing his hair, which seems so strange to us in the picture that shows him on the bridge of Arcola, was then extremely simple, for the dandies of the period (whom he detested) wore their hair much longer than he did. But he paid so little attention to it that his badly combed and badly powdered locks gave him a disagreeable look. His hands, too, changed after those days. Then they were thin and brown. Everyone knows that when he grew

older Napoleon was proud of his fine hands, and with good reason. When I recall what he looked like in the year 1795, entering the courtyard of the Hôtel de la Tranquilleté, how awkward and unsteady was his gait; how he wore an old and seedy round hat, pressed down over his eyes. when I think of the two badly powdered 'oreilles de chiens' hanging down over the collar of his iron-grey overcoat; how he never wore gloves, because they seemed to him a needless extravagance; how his boots were ill-fitting and unpolished—in a word, when I picture how extraordinarily wretched his whole appearance was, thanks to his extreme leanness and the yellow tint of his skin, and when I compare this with the Napoleon of after years, I find it hardly possible to realize that the two were the same man."

Nevertheless, at this very time, when to little Laura he seemed so insignificant and ugly, Napoleon's star was in the ascendant. The Thirteenth Vendémiaire made him the hero of the hour, and was the opening of his brilliant career. Soon afterwards he was appointed commander-in chief of the Army of Italy, with which he won his first miraculous victories.

Before starting to take over this command, he paid a farewell visit to Madame Permon, and with him came his adjutant, the dashing Junot, a captain in the hussars, then four-and-twenty years of age, who dandled Lulu Permon, a girl of twelve, on his knee. At that time Junot was in love with the charming Paulette, Napoleon's sister, and never dreamed that the little girl on his knee was destined to become his wife.

But events ran their course, which was favourable both to the general and to his adjutant. The conqueror of Italy continued his glorious career in the sandy deserts of Africa, and then returned from Egypt to become the head of the government. The little and inconspicuous general was soon transformed into the mighty First Consul, who, after the battle of Marengo, made his favourite adjutant governor of Paris.

No one was better fitted for the post than this valiant officer; no one could have better represented the interests

of the metropolis than Junot, who was honestly and unselfishly devoted to the First Consul. But a governor needs a governor's lady. Napoleon advised him to marry a rich woman, for the First Consul liked his officers and officials to make a brave display, and the upkeep of a governor's establishment in such a city as Paris is costly.

But Junot wanted a wife to please his own taste. His choice fell upon Lulu Permon now growing up. Bonaparte, to begin with, was adverse to the marriage, for the bride was almost penniless; but Junot would not allow anyone else, not even the First Consul, to settle his love affairs for him. Since Napoleon had always felt friendly towards the Permon family, he gave his consent at length. The Consul made up for Laura's lack of dowry by giving his governor a donation of one hundred thousand francs, and providing the bride with a trousseau worth forty thousand francs. In this way all difficulties were got over, and the marriage duly took place.

The governor's lady was barely seventeen years of age. Still, she understood very well how to surround herself with a circle of distinguished persons. Soon her salon became, just as her mother's had been, one of the most noted and popular in Paris. Frenchmen and foreigners assembled there, many of them persons who were by no means friendly to the First Consul. When he complained to her that she was keeping open house for so many of the English, she laughed at him and went on receiving whomsoever she pleased. She herself was the attractive centre of her circle, in which her sparkling wit, her brilliant intelligence, and sometimes her mordant satire, found full opportunity for display. Napoleon spoke of her as "la petite peste," and forgave her all her sins. He invariably found her conversation interesting, was delighted to tease her, and to fight verbal skirmishes with her, in which she was almost always victorious. Sometimes he would try to make her jealous of Junot. For her part, she took great pleasure in listening to Napoleon, when in his brusque and vigorous way he was talking to the men in his entourage. She never

failed to attend the receptions which, during the Consulate, were held in the Tuileries on the fifth day of each decade. On reaching home after these festivities, she would write down a record of what had been said by the man whose genius she admired, and whose intellectual and moral personality were extremely interesting to this shrewd observer.

Her life under the Consulate and the Empire was one of uninterrupted brilliancy and good fortune. Napoleon never forgot that when he had been poor and friendless in Paris, Junot had often helped him out financially. Emperor Napoleon was mindful of General Bonaparte's debts. To the end he had a special fondness and even weakness for Junot, and paid both the latter and his wife marked attention. The pair were very extravagant. Madame Junot needed vast sums for her diamonds, and her husband was a gambler. His huge income as governor was never enough for his needs. His regular salary from the State was five hundred thousand francs, and besides this he had the various minor emoluments attaching to such a post. On the average, his annual income amounted to one million four hundred thousand francs, but in spite of this he piled up huge debts year by year. When these debts became unusually pressing, he would come ruefully to the Emperor, who once gave him three hundred thousand francs in a single gift, to enable Junot to clear off the worst of his embarrassments. Similar gifts were made again and again. The amount of cash Napoleon handed over to the Junots forms a barely credible total.

But neither Madame Junot nor her husband was uneasy about this extravagance, and, despite Napoleon's warnings, they continued their usual way of living. It is not surprising that, in the end, their extraordinary luck almost intoxicated them. Still, much as he did for them, Napoleon never made Junot a marshal, and never presented him with a kingdom like Murat. He was made an envoy, and he became Duke of Abrantes, but he never wore a crown. In Lisbon, where he was in command in the year 1807, he fancied that he already held the crown of

Portugal in his hands, when the Prince Regent of that country had sailed for America. He was mistaken, however. Neither for him nor for his wife was the dream to be fulfilled. A further disappointment awaited him after the unlucky Russian campaign, for Napoleon put him under the command of Eugene Beauharnais! Next year, however, the Emperor made up for this by appointing Junot governor of Illyria.

Madame Junot did not accompany her husband to Trieste, but stayed in Paris to continue playing the part of governor's lady. Junot's health was already shattered, and the climate of Trieste did not mend matters, so that he soon became unfitted to attend to the duties of his post. Definite symptoms of mental disorder appeared. He was replaced by Fouché, Duke of Otranto, and sent to recruit at his father's home in Burgundy. There he became positively insane, and, having been left unguarded for a moment, threw himself out of the window, to perish in the fall.

When Napoleon was informed of the Duke of Abrantes' lamentable end, he is said to have exclaimed: "Poor Junot! How fond he was of me. I believe he would have shed the last drop of his blood for me!" The Emperor was right. Junot's death was the outcome of his self-sacrifice for Napoleon.

The Duchess of Abrantes was only twenty-nine years old when she became a widow. Her husband had left his affairs in terrible disorder, and it might have been expected that Napoleon would come to her aid. But he did nothing for her. Very soon came the collapse of the Empire, and this put an end to the possibility of his helping others. The once-fêted governor's lady had to retire to a modest dwelling, and, although not completely abandoned by all her friends, had to lead a very simple life. During the Hundred Days, there was a brief flicker of returning hope, until at length the defeat at Waterloo put the last touches to her ruin.

She became so poor that she had barely enough to provide the necessaries of life. Her creditors had taken everything, and her only resource was to accede to the

PAULINE BONAPARTE
After a painting by Lefèvre

request of a publisher that she should write her memoirs. These extended to eighteen volumes, and saw the light in the years 1831 to 1834. But, unlike another woman who had once received many benefits from Napoleon, she did not dip her pen in vitriol when she was writing about the man who had failed to come to her help in the days of her widowhood. The Duchess of Abrantes has in these memoirs erected a splendid memorial to herself as well as to Napoleon, for, in spite of their prolixity, they are signalized by the writer's great love and enthusiasm for that illustrious period in history. There breathes from her pages an aroma of Napoleonic greatness and Napoleonic conquests; and the stories of court life she presents to us throw an interesting light on Napoleon, showing this strange man's weaknesses as well as his strength.

Madame Junot is woman through and through, and therefore in her memoirs she does not hesitate to tell us of a little adventure which was gratifying to her self-love, even though it shows that on this occasion Napoleon did not behave very considerately to her. What woman would not be proud to record that Caesar had paid homage to her? What woman would not feel even more pride in recording that she had withstood Caesar's advances?

It was in the summer of the year 1803, when Junot had come back from his post as envoy in Lisbon, and had resumed his position as governor of Paris. The First Consul was at Malmaison, and Josephine was away at Plombières, taking the waters there in the hope of curing her barrenness. Youth, charm, gaiety, and elegance, were the chief characteristics of the Consular court, where Napoleon's young and lovely step-daughter, Hortense, now wife of Louis Bonaparte, was doing the honours. Dramatic performances were given; the host and the guests would go out shooting; games were played in the park at Malmaison. Sometimes the First Consul would run races with the young men and women, or join in his favourite game of prisoner's base, and was as merry as a child. In the evening, people went to bed, to sleep the refreshing sleep of those who are thoroughly tired

out; and a young woman like Madame Junot, only twenty years of age, would sleep sounder than most.

But her sleep was not always to be untroubled. One morning she was suddenly awakened by a noise in her room. Then a hand drew back the curtains of her bed, and the First Consul stood before her. Madame Junot did not know whether she was awake or asleep. She rubbed her eyes, looked at the clock, and wondered what on earth could be the reason for this untimely visit—seeing that it was only five o'clock in the morning.

Napoleon smiled contentedly at the astonishment of this pretty young woman, newly awakened. He hummed a song and when Madame Junot told him what o'clock it was, he answered indifferently: "What, only five o'clock? Well, let us have a talk." Then he calmly sat down beside the bed, laid a packet on the counterpane, a packet of letters he had been carrying under his arm and set to work reading them one after another as if he had been in his own study. Now and again he would ask Madame Junot a question, but otherwise he went on steadily with his reading. Madame Junot did not know what to make of this extraordinary visitor, who chose a young woman's bedroom in which to read his correspondence. This went on until six o'clock struck at a neighboring church tower. Napoleon sprang to his feet, collected his papers and departed, humming another song—after taking a somewhat confidential farewell of Madame Junot. In fact, he had pinched her foot through the bedclothes.

The governor's lady was given food for thought by this visit at so unusual an hour. She hoped, however, it had been no more than a passing caprice of the First Consul, and that the experience was not to be repeated. She was mistaken. Next morning, at the same hour, he reappeared, and again sat down beside her on her bed to read his letters. This time he paid her some pretty compliments about her fine teeth. When the clock struck six he went away just as he had done the day before, leaving the young woman even more astonished than on the previous occasion. Now she was on her guard, for she

loved her husband, and did not wish anyone to suppose that she had been unfaithful to him. If the First Consul were to be seen leaving her bedroom day after day at such an hour in the morning, people might certainly be inclined to suppose that he was her lover. Next night she locked her door, and took out the key, having given her maid strict orders that no one, no matter who, was to be admitted. She was awake long before five o'clock, for restless expectation had disturbed her slumbers. As she had anticipated, at the usual hour steps were to be heard in the passage. Someone rattled the handle. She heard the First Consul talking in low tones to her maid. Then he went away. This time, anyhow, she was rid of him, and she chuckled to herself at the trick she had played on him; but she had reckoned without her host. Just as she was about to go to sleep again, the door was violently forced open, and Napoleon stood before her with a far from friendly look on his face. "What are you thinking of, Madame Junot?" he asked her angrily. "Are you afraid of being murdered?" He had made his way into her room by using another key. This time he soon went away, after telling her that next morning he would come at the same hour to rouse her for a hunting party.

Madame Junot did not know what on earth to do, though of course she could guess what these visits portended. Luckily in the course of the day her husband came over from Paris to spend a few hours with her. Although the governor was not allowed to pass the night away from Paris without the First Consul's special permission, Laura found little difficulty in persuading him to stay with her, though she did not tell him the true reason why she wished him to do so.

She was mischievously delighted at the thought of how astonished Napoleon would be when, next morning, he saw Junot's head beside hers on the pillow. She could hardly sleep from excitement.

Morning came, and, as usual, Napoleon entered the lady's bedchamber. It is difficult to say whether Napoleon or Junot was more surprised of the two men; but

the husband asked the First Consul what he wanted of his wife so early in the morning.

"I came to call Madame Junot for a hunting party," was Napoleon's answer, while he looked savagely at the lady. "But I see," he went on, "that someone has come to call her even earlier than myself.—I suppose you know, Junot that I could punish you for being here without leave?"

"General, if anyone's fault was ever to be excused, mine is. If you had seen this little siren here yesterday evening when she was exercising all her witcheries and all her powers of seduction in order to make me stay here, I think you would forgive me."

"Well, well, I will forgive you—fully. Madame Junot is the only one who must be punished. But to show you that I am not angry with you, I will let you come out hunting with us. Have you a horse?"

"No, I drove here."

"All right. Jardin will get you a mount. . . .Goodbye, Madame Junot. Get up as quickly as you can." Then Napoleon left. In the afternoon, during the hunting party, he had a lively conversation with the young and refractory lady, calling her several times "little fool." Madame Junot does not enter into any further details, and it is difficult from her narrative to draw any conclusion.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MADAME DE STAEL

Madame de Stael was the only woman who could boast that the greatest man of modern times, the man who held the fate of the nations in his hands, was afraid of her. It was really so. Napoleon was afraid of Madame de Staël; he was afraid of her skilful pen; of her intriguing disposition; of her influence with many notable persons—in a word, he regarded her as a dangerous power, against which he must always go armed; as a person against whom he must always be ready to defend himself. But, since, Madame de Staël was the weaker, and Napoleon the stronger, the woman in the end had the worst of the combat.

The contest between these two powers was, to begin with, purely personal, being the outcome, on the one hand, of the woman's mortified pride because this genius scorned her tribute of admiration, and, on the other, of the man's detestation of all he regarded as unfeminine. Napoleon could like only those whom he considered "womanly" women. In his view, there was too much of the man about Madame de Staël; she was too emancipated, even in her coquetry, whose arts she at first tried upon the young general. The desire to play a leading part on the world's stage, which in her took the form of a strongly marked love of dominion, was to him, himself dictatorial and ambitious, positively hateful in a woman. Furthermore he disliked the very unfeminine way in which she showed her admiration for him in extravagant words and actions. The letters she wrote to the commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy were more like ardent declarations of love than expressions of pure admiration for his military genius. They were full of fire and wit, and in their mode of expression were worthy of the feelings of Corinne. No doubt he was not displeased that she should compare him with Scipio and

Tancred, for he was a combination of the simplicity of the one and the doughty deeds of the other; but the young general could not endure that she should mingle with this enthusiasm for the genius a woman's frank worship. He was at this time wholly devoted to Josephine, and Madame de Staël's adoration repelled him.

If we are to believe Bourrienne, he often heard General Bonaparte's caustic observations when reading the enthusiastic epistle of the Genevese authoress. Sometimes Napoleon would read him aloud a passage, saying with a contemptuous laugh: "Bourrienne, did you ever hear such extravagance? The woman must be mad!" But when, in one of these letters, Madame de Staël implied that a genius such as himself, who had married an insignificant Creole woman like Josephine (a woman who was neither worthy of him nor able to understand him) —when she implied that only an ardent spirit like her own could have been designed to mate with such a hero, Napoleon was outraged. How could so clever a woman as Madame de Staël have made such a blunder? Did she not know that she was thrusting impious fingers into Bonaparte's Holy of Holies, that she was profaning the sanctuary of his infinite love for Josephine? When a "blue-stocking" like this ventured to compare herself with Josephine—the only woman in the world, the charming and supreme mistress of the art of love—Napoleon could only dismiss her with a contemptuous smile. "A blue-stocking, a sentimentalist, and she is so presumptuous as to speak of herself in the same breath with Josephine! Bourrienne, I shall not answer these letters."

But this did not trouble Madame de Staël. Although her letters remained unanswered, her enthusiastic admiration for the hero persisted. She could hardly bear to await the conqueror's return from Italy. She wanted to be the first to greet him, to receive a glance from him. He was the most famous man of his day; his young forehead was crowned with the laurels of twenty battles! In his person were united all the virtues of a hero; genius, magnanimity, dauntless courage, disinterestedness, youth, and good fortune! Beside Bonaparte, the victor, all

other men were pigmies. To Madame de Staël he seemed notable on account of his character no less than on account of his marvellous feats of arms. Every one was talking of his generosity towards the enemy, of his sense of justice and his love of liberty. He understood how to appeal to the hearts of his soldiers, and how to speak to the French nation. But in addition to these qualities proper to a soldier, he also had a sense for the beauties of literature. He loved Ossian and the works of Rousseau, and he was well-versed in the writings of classical Greece and Rome. In a word, to Madame de Staël Bonaparte seemed a demigod, who radiated the force of originality as well as the charm of notoriety. She longed to see close at hand the thin features surrounded by long and straggling hair; to see the fires of liberty glowing in his eyes. She called him "the best republican in France, the freest of all Frenchmen!"

When therefore, on the fifteenth Frimaire of the year VI (December 5, 1797), General Bonaparte returned to Paris as the widely fêted conqueror, Madame de Staël left no stone unturned in the endeavour to get into personal contact with him. He had informed M. de Talleyrand, Minister for Foreign Affairs, of his intention to call on that gentleman next day. Talleyrand hastened to acquaint his friend, Madame de Staël, of the fact, so that she might be ready in his drawing-room to see face to face the hero whom she so ardently admired.

Madame de Staël did not need to be asked twice. She was at Talleyrand's by ten in the morning. Towards eleven, General Bonaparte was announced. But the dream she had cherished was speedily shattered. Napoleon took hardly any notice of her when the minister introduced her. He did, indeed, say a few courteous words, and delighted her by the remark that on his journey through Switzerland he had unsuccessfully tried to see her father at Coppet; but then, as if dreading a long conversation with her, he turned to other persons, and soon afterwards retired with Talleyrand into the minister's study.

None the less, Madame de Staël was enthralled by the young hero. She, a mistress of words, a brilliant and

lively woman, was at the first moment scarcely able to answer him. She could only stare at him with her large and widely-opened eyes. Amazed at her own confusion, she says: "I could not find words in which to answer him. . . . When I had recovered a little from my embarrassment and wonder, I became aware of an increasing sense of anxiety. . . . I saw him several times after this but was never able to breathe freely in his presence. Every time that I heard him speak, I was astonished at his ascendancy." Her admiration and veneration for the conqueror of Italy went so far that she transferred some of them to his adjutants. When that day at Talleyrand's, after luncheon, Colonel Lavalette wished to give precedence to Madame de Staël when entering the drawing-room the lady drew back, deferentially, saying: "How could I venture to walk in front of one of Bonaparte's adjutants?" This enthusiasm, and, above all, her wish to please the general, robbed her of almost all her cleverness as soon as she came near him. One day she admitted almost tearfully to Lucien Bonaparte: "In your brother's presence I become stupid because I want to please him. I suddenly find myself an ignoramus; I wish to speak to him, have to hunt for words, and twist my sentences this way and that. I would fain compel him to take an interest in me, and yet in his presence I become a perfect goose."

In Bonaparte she admired the great general, the unselfish philosopher, and the upright republican, who, despite his fame, did not come forth from his modest reserve. His modesty was shown by the words he addressed to those present at Talleyrand's when he came back out of the minister's study: "Citizens, the enthusiasm you show for me touches me profoundly. I have waged war and made peace to the best of my ability. Now it behoves the Directory to turn these victories to account for the good and the success of the republic." It was inevitable that such words should arouse enthusiasm in a woman who was a devotee of liberty. Thenceforward she became a partisan of Napoleon, although

MADAME DE STAËL
After a painting by Gérard

she felt that he mistrusted her and saw that he deliberately shunned her company.

By every means in her power she tried to attract the hero to her side, and to make him join her political circle; but she was bitterly disappointed. Not merely did she fail to charm him, as she had at first secretly hoped to do; but she made him afraid of her, so that in the end he positively loathed her. He drove her to despair by his dry and sometimes rough answers. One day she asked him what woman he regarded as the most famous in the world, and he rejoined: "The woman who has given birth to most children." Madame de Staël had probably expected a very different answer, and she said somewhat tartly that he was reputed to care very little for women. "Excuse me, Madame," answered Bonaparte with emphasis, "I love mine."

Napoleon's detestation of Madame de Staël was unspeakable. He regarded her as a dangerous power: as one whom to begin with he must treat cautiously, for she had influential associates; but as one whom he must avoid as far as he could. But she was present at every festivity, every dinner party, every dance, given in honour of the general. She courted him with her glances, ostentatiously addressed her words to him or at him, and tried to single him out at every opportunity. At all costs she wanted him to show his interest in her. She longed to win him over to her side; and, having a passion for rule, she wanted to influence his plans and his actions. In short, since she could not exercise power overtly in her own person, she wanted to rule the State from her salon. Furthermore, she wanted to show him how much power a woman can exercise over a man. But Bonaparte would not place himself under her tutelage. He remained unapproachable. First of all, the women he liked were such women as Josephine; women who were soft, gentle, and pliable; women whose only recommendations were beauty and charm. He did not find these qualities in Madame de Staël. Femininity in her was completely eclipsed by her keen intelligence, her acquirements, her personality as a woman of note; by her desire, as a woman

of note, to play a leading part in the world. Napoleon was not a Benjamin Constant, to allow himself readily to be harnessed to her triumphal car. Between the two there gradually developed a mistrust, which in due time, since each of them had a passionate nature, developed into an intense and inextinguishable hatred. Madame de Staël's pen, her salon, her interference in politics, all these repelled Napoleon. He did not desire to be watched or to be advised. For these reasons, he dealt with her more strictly than she perhaps deserved. For these reasons, he compelled her to adopt that restless and wandering life which she had to lead after the appearance of her book *De la littérature.*

This book was her confession of political faith. In it she boldly and resolutely insisted that nothing but liberty and republican institutions could ensure progress towards human perfection; she glorified the revolution, and fiercely attacked the Eighteenth Brumaire. For this reason, the First Consul forbade her to come within forty leagues of Paris. No doubt she had not said anything personal against Napoleon, but her book contained a thousand shafts which were really directed against him and his rule. If he wished to make his authority prevail (and at that time his power was less firmly established than many people believe), he must perforce take strong measures against the woman who had written such a book. His wrath knew no bounds. The intercession of Madame de Staël's friends (Joseph Bonaparte, General Junot, Madame Récamier, and others) was of no avail. Nay, some of them, Madame de Récamier for instance fell into disfavour because of their advocacy. Napoleon was inexorable. Madame de Staël set out on her first visit to Germany; and after her father's death she went to Italy. There she wrote *Corinne.* Not until *Corinne* had been published did she venture to set foot on French soil once more, in the hope that Napoleon would have forgotten her.

At this time the Emperor had taken the field against Prussia. During his absence, his well-organized police had kept a wary eye on Madame de Staël, so that the

Emperor was more speedily informed of all her doings and plans than the lady imagined. He wrote from Pultusk to Fouché, the Minister of Police:

"Do not allow this woman, Madame de Staël, to come near Paris; I believe she is not far away from it." When he learned that she was really in the city, he uttered a threat: "If she does not leave Paris, have her arrested." Thereupon Madame de Staël fled to Coppet, and it was not until 1810 that she ventured to approach the French capital once more. She lived for a time at Chaumont, and sent Napoleon an impassioned letter in the hope of touching his heart. The attempt was fruitless. What he then thought about her is plainly shown by his words to Prince Metternich at that period, when the Austrian ventured to become Madame de Staël's advocate. "I will not allow Madame de Staël to enter Paris," said the Emperor; "and I have good reasons for my prohibition. If Madame de Staël were willing or knew how to become either a royalist or a republican, I should have nothing against her, but she is like a driving wheel which sets the salons in motion. Only in France is such a woman to be feared, and I will have nothing to do with her."

Moreover, his outlook on life, and Madame de Staël's were poles apart. Madame de Staël was an ideologue and Napoleon hated ideologues. This hatred was not the outcome of his temperament, but was due to the nature of the time in which he had grown up, and to the events which had formed his character. Madame de Staël, who had placed on him all her hopes for the liberty of her country, who had almost prayed to him as the purest and most upright of republicans, could never forgive him for having "based despotism upon non-morality," as she phrased it. Madame de Rémusat has aptly described Madame de Staël's feeling towards her great enemy in the following words: "Madame de Staël had watched Bonaparte grow into Napoleon. On the nineteenth Brumaire she shed bitter tears over the face of liberty. She armed to the teeth in defence of liberty, carrying on the fight for fifteen years without a sign of weakness. Persecuted, wandering from land to land, during the great

silence of captive Europe hers was the voice which was raised in the name of the noblest interests of humanity, in the name of freedom and morality."

This voice has come down to us especially in the book *De l'Allemagne*. We all know what fate was then awaiting Germany. The work which was a pæan on Germany could not but arouse the fury of Emperor Napoleon. He promptly ordered its suppression, had the whole edition destroyed, the typefounts broken up and the manuscript impounded. Now the disfavour of the man of might had been incurred for the duration of his life, and once again Madame de Staël, like the wandering Jew, had to start on her pilgrimage.

But Napoleon's proceedings against Madame de Staël aroused a terrible storm across the French frontiers, where *De l'Allemagne* had been read with intense enthusiasm. The fierce indignation against Napoleon for his treatment of the author did him far more harm than would have ensued if he had let the book circulate unhindered in Paris.

It was extremely injudicious of Napoleon to make Madame de Staël his enemy. With the exercise of a very little diplomacy he could have won over this woman to his side, for, notwithstanding his harshness towards her, her admiration for him lasted a long time. As late as 1800, when Napoleon had already become Consul, Madame de Staël wrote to Heinrich Meister: "Have you been able to resist the impulse to see the hero? He is going to conquer Italy anew, and will sign a second peace at Campo Formio! Is not that historic?" But this admiration did not prevent her from writing fierce things in her memoirs about the victory of Marengo, or from wrathfully exclaiming: "I wish he had been beaten!" Yet at this very time there was nothing she longed for more than a reconciliation with Napoleon. Joseph Bonaparte once said to his brother: "If you would only show her a little kindly feeling, she would worship you." Napoleon is said to have answered: "Oh, that is too much! I don't want her adoration. The woman is odious."

The blind anger with which Napoleon drove Madame

de Staël out of France, ultimately aroused in her an intense hatred for him, and he himself came to realize that in Germany, Russia, Austria, Sweden, and England, this hatred had done him far more harm than if he had tolerated his enemy's presence in Paris. In the long run, she triumphed over him by her writings, as Napoleon himself admitted, for in the year 1808 he said to Fontanes: "Do you know what I wonder at most in all the world? The incapability of force to organize anything. There are only two powers in the world: the sword and the spirit . . . Ultimately, however, the sword will always be vanquished by the spirit." This dreaded conqueror had come to realize that the world cannot be managed simply by the mailed fist, but that public opinion must have a word to say in the matter.

Madame de Staël was not to return to France until she came in the company of the allies, although she had once said to Benjamin Constant: "I would rather God should banish me from France for ever than owe my return to foreigners." Though in the end she was victorious, it is a fact that, despite many mistakes, many distortions of view, and many injustices towards Napoleon and France, she was not spiteful in her victory, and never descended to mean invectives against her fallen enemy. Of her own feelings when he came back from Elba, she says: "I could not have been more surprised had the earth opened beneath my feet." This event seemed to her the greatest possible misfortune for France, but she did not rail against her enemy as so many others did. She even admitted that what Napoleon had done was perfectly natural, and that he could not but have attempted to reconqueror his lost throne.

No doubt the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* tells us a very different story of Madame de Staël's attitude in the year 1815. We learn there that she was amazed at Napoleon's action that she no longer regarded him as simply human, but considered that his behaviour was godlike. We are even told that she wrote to the Emperor saying that she had been fully conquered by this great event, and that if he would pay her two million francs, the sum France

had owed her father, she would hence forward devote her pen and her principles to the service of her country. The letter which she sent through Joseph Bonaparte to greet the Emperor on his return is extant. But if Madame de Staël wrote in the foregoing way to Napoleon, it was not from conviction, but only as a diplomatic move, because she believed that that would be the best way of getting the money she greatly needed. Napoleon, to whom it was important at this crisis to conciliate, as far as possible, those who had been his enemies, answered that her offer was a most flattering one and that he greatly prized her abilities, but unfortunately he was not wealthy enough to buy them at that price.

For the rest, we may well ask which of the two suffered most from the enmity, Napoleon or Madame de Staël? Each of them was persistent in the endeavour to make life difficult for the other; and Napoleon, in persecuting Madame de Staël, was only doing what the Directory and the Convention had done before him. The Committee of Public Safety had ordered Monsieur de Staël, who was then Swedish envoy in Paris, to keep his wife out of the Metropolis, since she was engaged there in political intrigues. It was only her husband's intercession which enabled her to stay in the capital. A little later, in the year 1795, the Directory kept Madame de Staël under close observation in her château at Coppet, and issued an order for her immediate arrest should she return to France. In the days of the old regime, she would probably have become acquainted with the inside of the Bastille, had she been as vigorous in her attacks upon the king and the monarchy as she was upon Napoleon and the Empire. Napoleon was forced into taking severe measures against Madame de Staël, who was continually fanning the flames of hatred against him. He could not possibly tolerate her presence in so inflammable a city as Paris. All he did was to expel her from this city and its neighbourhood—though it must be admitted that to a woman of Madame de Staël's tastes this was equivalent to expulsion from paradise. Elsewhere in Europe

she could do whatever she pleased; though even in her exile he kept her under close observation.

Nor did she neglect anything that might injure him. In Berlin, Saint Petersburg, Stockholm, Vienna, Italy, and England, she leagued herself with his enemies, and goaded them into hostile activities. She had only herself to thank for the fact that in the end she was practically kept a prisoner in Coppet.

It was mainly her own fault that Madame de Staël suffered so much under Napoleon's rule, though no doubt she was in many respects the victim of unjust tyranny and the victim of the age in which she lived. Although she was far-seeing and just when her passions were not involved, in her hatred she became blind. All the same, like her great enemy, she was a genius. Napoleon himself said as much: "She was a woman of great talent and great genius. Nor would it be fair to say that she was a bad woman, but she was a disturbing element and had much influence." Napoleon must be honoured for his ability to recognize Madame de Staël's good side.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

MADAME DE REMUSAT

During the years 1879-1880 the memoirs of Madame de Rémusat appeared in three volumes. In France and abroad, the book aroused the greatest interest, for people were eager to learn how the lady described the man whom at first she had so greatly admired and subsequently so fiercely hated. The memoirs ran through many editions, and there were numerous translations. They contained a great many new details concerning Napoleon's personality, as well as a number of character traits and accounts of his actions; and these, although the description was not always free from bias, made a very vivid impression, and afforded a profound insight into Napoleon's private life as Consul and as Emperor. Memoirs written by women have often this advantage over those written by men, that the former show a tendency to keener judgments and more detailed treatment of things and persons, whereas writers of the male sex are inclined for the most part to deal with generalities, with the circumstances of the time and the interaction of events.

Madame de Rémusat was able to make her book extremely vivid by giving a number of admirably told anecdotes of court life. Her chief defect was that she inclined too much to look through the spectacles of her good friend Talleyrand, whose pockets were always full of court gossip. But she had a keen understanding, and excellent powers of observation; and from youth upwards she had made a habit of passing critical judgments on everything that came under her notice.

She sprang from one of the highly respected families of France, and her mother had given her an excellent though almost puritanical education. Her father, Charles Gravier de Vergennes, had before the revolution been intendant of Auch, and had played a notable part. At the age of sixteen, Claire Elisabeth Jeanne Gravier de

Vergennes married De Rémusat, the attorney general. He was twice her age, but it was a love match.[1]

Claire was not remarkable for good looks. She was small and thickset, but had a lively countenance, expressive dark eyes, and, above all, a sparkling intelligence. She had the rare talent of being a good listener. Here is her own description of her appearance and character in the days of the Consulate, when she was twenty-three years old and had just come to court for the first time: "I could not be called pretty, but I think I looked pleasing. Court dress suited me. I had fine eyes, my hair was black, my teeth were white, my nose and my features generally were too marked for a small though well-shaped figure. At the court I was regarded as a talented woman, though there was not much warrant for the opinion. Certainly I was not lacking in wit and intelligence; but in addition I had a good share of ardency, so that my spirit was ap to outrun my words and actions, leading me at times into mistakes which a more reasonable and cooler person might have avoided. People were often mistaken in me at this court. I was lively, and was believed to be quarrelsome. I was eager to make the acquaintance of notable persons, and was therefore thought to be ambitious."

This is the only detailed account of her appearance we possess, for the memorialists among her contemporaries say very little of her. We must therefore be content with what we have. Certainly what Madame de Rémusat says of herself harmonizes quite well with such details as others have given, and does not conflict with the portraits that have come down to us. She owed her intellectual development mainly to her mother, both an able and a strict woman. Her father and her grandfather, like so many more of the nobility, had ended their days on the scaffold in July 1794. Her mother was left very badly off. M. de Rémusat, too, had lost his job owing to the revolution. Then, as chance willed it, his young wife, barely nineteen, went to spend the summer of 1799 in her mother's country house at Croissy, where Josephine, wife of General Bonaparte (then in Egypt) was a neigh-

[1] Madame de Rémusat was born in Paris on January 5, 1780.

bour. Malmaison and Croissy are very close together, and the respective inmates soon became acquainted. Josephine found it easy to make a conquest of young Madame de Rémusat. The general's lady was so amiable, so attractive, and could talk so prettily, that Madame de Vergennes, too, soon came under her spell. Moreover, Madame de Rémusat's mother was not slow to recognize the importance of winning such a friend. The name of the conqueror of Italy was widely renowned, and the news of Bonaparte's Egyptian victories was not without effect at Croissy.

Ere long General Bonaparte came back from the Pyramids to guide the rudder of state with his strong hand. Now Madame de Vergennes was able to turn her acquaintanceship with Josephine Bonaparte to account. She did everything she could to enlist Josephine's influence with Napoleon in order to secure her son-in-law's and her daughter's future under the new government. Success came more speedily than she had hoped. The First Consul appointed M. de Rémusat marshal of the palace, and his wife became one of Josephine's companions. Subsequently Madame de Rémusat received the title of lady of the palace.

Since the Consul's court was mainly peopled by army officers and their wives, Monsieur and Madame de Rémusat (who, though not belonging to the first families of the realm, were nevertheless among the few persons of noble birth at the new court, among the few who had speedily given their support to the new government) soon attained a position of importance. M. de Rémusat was an accomplished man of the world, and was in his prime. His young wife, who had been trained in the manners and customs of the old regime, was far more highly cultured than most of the ladies at the First Consul's court. The majority of these had risen from the ranks. Madame de Rémusat's confident and yet reserved manners—which, for all their simplicity, recalled those of a grande dame,—her frank but excellent conversation, and the skill with which she could put an end to any little embarrassment that might occur in social life, soon attracted the

First Consul's attention. He was very anxious that there should be a good tone at his court, and it seemed to him that Madame de Rémusat was especially fitted to set the other ladies a good example. After a while, indeed, her name was put in the shade by more famous ones. But Napoleon was fond of talking to her, valuing her conversation more than that of any of the other court ladies. He could always find something interesting to discuss with her, whereas when talking to the others he was generally content with crude jests, indiscreet questions, or blunt contradictions. He was, in fact, cautious in his dealings with this lively little lady, who was not afraid, on occasions, to blame him or to set him to rights. Her apt and ready answers pleased him; and he was always glad to enter into an argument with her, in which he sometimes got the worst of it.

When the First Consul went to Boulogne shortly after the breach of the peace of Amiens, M. de Rémusat, who had accompanied him as marshal of the palace, was unlucky enough to fall sick of a fever. His wife hastened to her husband's bedside. Hardly had she reached the headquarters at Pont-de-Briques, when Napoleon sent for her, in order to give her a little consolation regarding her husband's illness. He was extremely amiable to the young and inexperienced woman, gave her a fatherly kiss on the cheeks, and was most benevolent. Madame de Rémusat, wept, believing that her beloved husband was at the point of death. But the First Consul was able to re-assure her, and to dry her tears. He invited her to lunch, and soon the pair were in the thick of a lively conversation. Napoleon recalled many of the bright repartees Madame de Rémusat had made in Paris. He knew, too, that she was well versed in English literature, and especially in the works of Shakespeare. In fact he was amazed to find how well-informed this young woman was. He talked to her about Ossian, a book he had loved in his youth. Then he remarked that he felt it his duty to take great care of her, now that she had come to this camp of rough soldiers. He therefore invited her to take her meals with him every day. Although at first she was a little alarmed

at this outflow of kindliness, Madame de Rémusat accepted the invitation, and was charmed by his affability and gallantry. At meals he was always loquacious, and especially in the evenings he liked to prolong the conversation. He told his guest about his strange and melancholy youth, about his fondness for the works of Rousseau, about the growth of his sentiments in general. Madame de Rémusat was an attentive listener, and was proud that the leading man in the State should deign to make those confessions to a young and inexperienced woman. It is not surprising that she began to entertain the hope of exercising still greater influence over him.

Soon the officers and the common soldiers at Boulogne began to put their own construction upon their general's relationship with this young and agreeable woman. It seemed to them impossible that a man, a soldier, just like any other, should spend hours alone with a pretty woman only for the purposes of intellectual converse. Madame de Rémusat's reputation was imperilled, and subsequently she had much ado to avert the suspicion that she had been Napoleon's mistress. Even Josephine, who was very fond of her, was jealous for a time. But there was absolutely no ground for any suspicion. Madame de Rémusat was a pure-minded woman both in thought and deed. She was a wife and a mother, nothing more. She loved her husband and her son, the latter having been born when she was only seventeen. Her family and her domestic life were all in all to her. Certainly she would have liked to be a spiritual adviser to the man who held the fate of the world in his hands, to have been his favourite in her sense of the word; but nothing would have induced her to have become his mistress. It tickled her feminine vanity that the First Consul singled her out for his attentions, that he deigned to tell her what he thought of men and things; and she dreamed of influence and favour, without wishing to give any more in return than the treasures of her wit and her knowledge. But her expectations were doomed to disappointment just like those of Madame de Staël. Mortified vanity, in the end, alienated her more and more from Napoleon.

The Emperor did not wreak vengeance on her for this as he did on the great enemy in Geneva. Although Madame de Rémusat, during the days of the Empire, came to associate more and more with his foes, or (to speak less harshly) formed the centre of a circle which was displeasing to Napoleon, he continued to feel respect and esteem for her. Madame de Rémusat stayed with Josephine until the death of the ex-Empress. Her husband, too, although Napoleon was not always satisfied with him, retained his post until the fall of the Empire. The only difference, as time passed, was that Napoleon, who had at first lavished gifts on the Rémusats, tightened his purse-strings. Still, his earlier benefactions had enriched them. They had been almost destitute when they first came to the consular court, but they were well-to-do when they saved themselves and their goods out of the wreck of the Empire, and espoused the cause of the Bourbons.

During the Consulate and the Empire, Madame de Rémusat, just like Madame Junot, made it her practice, at the close of an eventful or interesting day, to write down notes and impressions, with a record of her conversations with Napoleon and other notable personalities at court. But when the Napoleonic empire collapsed and the Bourbons entered Paris, Madame de Rémusat was afraid of being regarded as a Bonapartist, so she burned her manuscript. When, however, in the year 1818, Madame de Staël's work *Considerations sur la révolution française* was published, and when this book, which contained numerous reflections concerning Napoleon's personality and methods of government, had a striking success, Madame de Rémusat, at the instigation of her son, Charles, decided to do her best to rewrite her memoirs.

We can sympathize with the spirit in which they were now penned. Since Madame de Rémusat, while the Emperor was still on the throne, had been a close friend of Talleyrand's and had been much influenced by him, we can readily understand that in the Restoration period her feelings towards Napoleon grew increasingly bitter. Furthermore, the liberal notions of her son, for whom

she had once designed the part of her hero's historian, contributed to her acerbity. Nevertheless it is obvious that she dreaded the strict judgment of posterity, for on October 8, 1818, she wrote to her son as follows: "What would people think of me if my son were to publish all this?"

Madame de Rémusat's memoirs would certainly form one of the leading authorities concerning the Napoleonic age, had they not been inspired and distorted by so intense a hatred for the world ruler. None the less, those well-acquainted with the period will always be able to derive useful information from the book, for it contains a wealth of details concerning the life of the Emperor and his family which are of the utmost value so long as they are cautiously used. Furthermore Madame de Rémusat gives us a detailed description of Napoleon's appearance and temperament. Sifting the wheat from the chaff, we get one of the best portraits ever limned of the Consul and the Emperor. Although Madame de Rémusat never misses a chance of abusing Napoleon, between the lines we can read her unstinted admiration for the man of the century, for the victor of Montenotte, Arcola, Rivoli, the Pyramids, and Marengo—in those early days. The young heroic figure still loomed large before her eyes.

Luckily she herself has provided us with the antidote to her mood of 1818. I refer to the letters which, during the Empire, she wrote to her husband and her son. These are a true reflection of her feelings, being penned as the direct expression of the events they describe.[2] In these epistles we see her unconcealed respect and admiration for the hero who with one blow had changed the aspect of the world. They show us that Madame de Rémusat still luxuriated in memories of the happy days at Pont-de-Briques. The letters disclose her genuine thoughts at a time when she still recognized the good in Napoleon, and esteemed it at its true worth. We might almost be inclined to regard her sentiments and enthusiasm as the

[2] They were published in 1881, in two volumes, under the title, *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, 1804–1814.

outcome of love, did we not know that they arose solely out of the receptiveness of her spirit to all that was great and sublime, and also of her gratitude to one who had showered benefits upon her and her family. Subsequently this admirable sense of gratitude was put to flight by the royalist principles to which Madame de Rémusat once more adhered. There was nothing left but a very modest recognition of the good side of the man to whom she and her husband owed so much.

One passage in the memoirs runs as follows: "Perhaps the Emperor would have been a better man if he had understood his fellows better, and above all if he had loved them more." These words disclose all her regret that women, and especially women of talent, had so little influence upon him; and that she herself had never been able to play the long-desired part of able and intelligent counsellor.

In Madame de Rémusat's letters there is no word concerning Napoleon's alleged discourtesy to women. In this matter she praises him unreservedly. He is described as irresistible. His smile is bewitching; his affability, most attractive. He is courtly; his conversation is brilliant; he pays delicate and refined compliments. Whereas in the memoirs he is described as awkward and embarrassed in ladies' society, in a letter to her husband under date April 24, 1805, Madame de Rémusat writes: "I do not know whether you will have seen the French newspapers. If so you will have noticed a detailed description of the extraordinarily amiable way in which the Emperor behaved at Brienne. Madame de Brienne was bubbling over with delight. You could not conceive anything more amiable than the Emperor during this visit. I have seen letters from Madame de Damas, full of charming anecdotes and expressions. In a word, he was positively coquettish, and this had an excellent effect in our company—difficult though it is to satisfy. . . . There is not a single lady of our acquaintance who was not just as enthusiastic about him as Madame de Brienne."

In another letter to her husband, who had written to tell her how kindly Napoleon had smiled on him, she wrote:

"I wish you could more often enjoy that consoling smile from our ruler." When she heard the news of the victory of Austerlitz, she became almost lyrical in her enthusiasm, writing thus to her husband: "This has been an almost miraculous campaign! I feel as if I could echo the words of a country gentleman of our acquaintance who wrote yesterday to my mother saying that beside our Emperor, Caesar and Alexander would be only lieutenants!"

Such examples of enthusiasm for Napoleon are innumerable in Madame de Rémusat's letters. Nothing but unsatisfied ambition and mortified vanity can account for her complete change of mood, so that from being an ardent admirer she became a depreciator. We touch the mystery of a woman's heart, that heart which is unfathomable. She had been disappointed in her boldest hopes, and could not forgive the man who would not allow any woman at his court to gain an influence over him—not even the woman whose intellectual attainments he so greatly esteemed.

Madame de Rémusat did not long survive the ruler who had once seemed to her a hero. She died in December 1821, in the same year as Napoleon.

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

CHAPTER TWENTY

COUNTESS CHARLOTTE VON KIELMANSEGG

IMPENETRABLE obscurity surrounds the relationships of Napoleon to the Saxon Countess Auguste Charlotte von Kielmansegg née Schönberg, and, by her first marriage, Countess Lynar.[1]

The darkness will not be completely dispelled until this remarkable woman's diaries have been published. They are supposed to contain interesting and enlightening details concerning her relationship to Napoleon, which most people are still inclined to regard as a secret love intimacy. But all attempts on the part of biographers and historians to get a sight of these remarkable documents have hitherto been fruitless. The diaries are in the safe guardianship of Count Lynar auf Schmochtitz, one of the Countess's descendants by her first marriage. I, too, have vainly requested permission to look at them.[2]

As far as we are able to learn from the available material, Countess Charlotte did not meet the Emperor of the French for the first time at the court of the King of Saxony in 1812, for she had already secured a favourable reception at Napoleon's court at Saint-Cloud during her stay in Paris in the years 1809-1812, although her husband was suspected by the French police of being a spy, and was kept under close observation. The countess's intercession with the French Government on behalf of her husband was fairly successful, for she was able to enlist the powerful aid of Fouché (the Minister of Police), Savary, and the royal family of Westphalia. As late as August in the year 1818, the Countess expressed her thanks to the sometime Queen of Westphalia (who was then living in Schönau under the title of Duchess of

[1] She was the daughter of Peter August von Schönberg, marshal of the palace in Electoral Saxony. She was born on May 18, 1777, and her first husband was Count Rochus August von Lynar, who died on August 1, 1800. She was married to Count Ferdinand von Kielmansegg in the year 1802.

[2] Recently the diaries have been placed at the disposal of the author.

Montfort with her husband Jerome Bonaparte). Countess Charlotte used the following words: "When, in the year 1809, the man whose name I bear and with whom I was then still associated had mortally affronted you, I lacked courage to present myself before you. Some months after this event, Your Majesty summoned me to a private audience in Paris, and, instead of crushing us, instead of condemning us among the guilty, Your Majesty gratified me by your noble and magnanimous reception."

When war broke out again in the year 1812, and the Countess of Kielmansegg finally returned to Saxony, and when the Emperor of the French, accompanied by his young wife Marie Louise, had moved his court to Dresden, she was one of the first who hastened to pay him homage. Next year she saw him again, when his fame had somewhat dimmed, but when he was still a great power.

We can well believe that this woman of thirty-five, who was regarded as one of the most remarkable beauties at the Saxon court, must have attracted Napoleon's attention. Her tall and slender figure made her appearance queenly. Her distinguished and regular features, framed in dark ringlets gave her a proud and at the same time a passionate expression. Her dark-blue eyes sometimes sparkled with wit and high spirits; but sometimes they indicated profound depression. All her movements breathed charm and dignity. In short, "there was always something peculiar about her, usually elevating and alluring, but sometimes repellent." Such was the judgment of a friend of her girlhood, the daughter of the Dresden physician, Mittelhäuser.

It is amazing that there is no mention of Countess Kielmansegg or of her encounters with Napoleon in any of the contemporary French memoirs, or even in the campaigning records of the Saxon Colonel Odeleben. Of course this is no reason for believing that she never had any relationships with the Emperor of the French. All the same, there are no proofs that she was his mistress. On the whole, the evidence indicates that she was his friend, that she admired his genius, with which she

had already made herself acquainted and which she had learned to value during her stay in Paris. But when Countess Kielmansegg was in Paris, Napoleon had only recently been married to Marie Louise. All his free time was given to his young wife. During this period he did not indulge in any long-lasting amours, not even with Countess Walewska, who had now become nothing more to him than a friend. It is not because I believe Napoleon to have been a Joseph, that I contend he remained faithful to Marie Louise for the first three years at least; but I am sure that it was a point of pride with him to avoid, at this time, any liaison with another married woman, any such gross unfaithfulness to the daughter of the Caesars. It is likely enough that from time to time at this epoch he may have had temporary amorous relationships of a purely physical character. But Countess Kielmansegg, who was a proud woman, would never have lent herself to anything of the kind. If she had entered into an intimate relationship with Napoleon, it would never have been on such a casual footing.

For much the same reasons, it is difficult to believe that there was an intimate relationship between the two at Dresden in 1812. Napoleon was accompanied thither by his young wife, who claimed every minute of his free time. As we know, Marie Louise restricted her visits and her comings and goings to the utmost, so that she might always be close to the Emperor. Moreover, Napoleon was particularly anxious to exhibit himself before his father-in-law and his mother-in-law, the Emperor and the Empress of Austria, as the genuine impersonation of family happiness. This was a matter of ambition with him, no less than one of policy. He wished to show the world that as man, no less than as conqueror and as Emperor, he was worthy of this wife of ancient lineage.

It is true that in the year 1813 Napoleon seems to have had a private suite of apartments in the Marcolini Palace in Dresden; but we do not know whether Countess Kielmansegg ever visited these rooms, or even whether they were ever used for gallant purposes. The evidence as to this last matter is conflicting. We have to remember that

some of the secret agents of the period were women. It is quite possible that some of the women who visited Napoleon in Dresden during the year 1813 did so in this capacity, for, although he detested interference on the part of women in politics, he would not have hesitated to learn anything he could from a woman spy as to the doings of his enemies. Now, does the fact that Countess Kielmansegg was in epistolary correspondence with Fouché, Savary, and several of the French generals, justify us in concluding that she had a love relationship with Napoleon? It seems more likely that Napoleon was turning the lady's talents to account as a spy, for she was an extremely able woman, she had close associates in high quarters, and he knew her to be devoted to his interests. Another possible alternative is that Fouché was at work on his own account, employing Countess Kielmansegg as a medium by which he could acquire information regarding Saxon affairs.

It might be suggested that Countess Kielmansegg's divorce from her husband was due to her intimate relationships with the Emperor of the French. But this divorce did not take place until the year 1817. It seems, indeed, that the Kielmanseggs had not lived together as man and wife since 1813; but the cause of their estrangement may well have been that the Count was a zealous patriot, a teutonophil, a hater of the French, whereas the Countess was an ardent francophil. Moreover, Countess Kielmansegg was of a somewhat peculiar, dictatorial and overenthusiastic temperament, and her husband considered that he had good grounds for suspecting her of unfaithfulness to him during the Saxon campaign. But the name of Emperor Napoleon had not been mooted as that of her lover, Kielmansegg's suspicion having fallen upon some of the highly placed French officers who frequented Countess Charlotte's mansion at Schmochtitz near Bautzen. The lady protested vigourously that there was no warrant for such suspicions. All the same, her husband refused to live with her any longer, the reason given for this in the Kielmansegg family chronicles being that "the Countess was rumoured to be in communication with

agents of the French secret police, and these associations exposed the Count to the danger of arrest."

But a very remarkable story is that which concerns a certain Karl Heinrich Schönberg, a cooper by trade, at the time of his death in Dürrhennersdorf. This man is believed to have been her son. Charlotte von Kielmansegg's own story is that Karl Heinrich was entrusted to her as a newborn infant in the year 1816 by Fouché, and that she did not know who the child's parents were. The story is certainly a queer one, but it has no evidential value as regards the Countess's relationships with Napoleon. If, as is so often asserted, the boy was a son of the Emperor and of Countess Kielmansegg, we should have to suppose that the lady must have paid the Emperor a visit in St. Helena in the end of the year 1815 or the beginning of the year 1816. But there is definite proof that during the six years of his imprisonment in St. Helena, no woman from Europe went to see the Emperor. Nor was Countess Kielmansegg ever in Elba. The only woman who visited the Emperor in the Mediterranean island was Marie Walewska. Furthermore, if Karl Heinrich had been Napoleon's son, the Emperor would have provided for the boy, just as he continued to provide lavishly for his two acknowledged illegitimate children after his marriage to Marie Louise. Besides, it seems most probable that Countess Kielmansegg would have left a liberal legacy to this Karl Heinrich had he been her son by a man of so much note as Napoleon, and would not have apprenticed him to the arduous handicraft of a cooper. The Countess's story of the matter in her will runs as follows:

"Monsieur Fouché, who was French envoy at the court of Dresden in the year 1816, had received there various persons who had been proscribed in France. Among them was a man accompanied by a woman with child by him. Monsieur Fouché, who had known me in France and had confidence in me, asked me whether I would take care of this woman and of the child to which she was about to give birth. I agreed, and the woman in question came to my mansion of Schmochtitz when her

delivery was close at hand. Here, on September 6,1816, she gave birth to a boy, who was handed over to the care of the accoucheur, Dr. Bönisch of Kamenz. At the time of the delivery, the only other persons present were myself and a woman named Schneider, the housekeeper at Schmochtitz. Dr. Bönisch had the child christened Karl Heinrich, and looked after him for a year, when I had the little boy sent to Dürrhennersdorf and entrusted to the care of Forester Lodemann, to whom I handed over the sums received for this purpose at intervals from Monsieur Fouché. But when, after the death of Monsieur Fouché,[3] the money for the care of Karl Heinrich (which had for some time been in arrears because there was a plan to send the boy back to France), ceased to arrive, I was myself compelled, if only on account of Dr. Bönisch, to undertake the lad's support, and in especial to arrange for his learning a handicraft. But when Dr. Bönisch, the only witness who could have helped me in the matter, had died, and when the young man had come of age, he, influenced by the knowledge that I had assisted in his upbringing, and by the general opinion among those with whom he associated that he was my son, brought a lawsuit against me in Dresden. He was allowed to put in a sworn plea to this effect. I take this opportunity of giving a reiterated solemn assurance that his contention is false! . . . But in virtue of the before-mentioned legal proceedings the said Karl is entitled to become one of my heirs."

Besides Karl Heinrich, another man, Ernst Ludwig Wolf Graf, put in a claim to the inheritance of Countess Charlotte von Kielmansegg. He declared that he was the fruit of a union of the Countess with Napoleon, the only evidence he had in support of this assertion being his remarkable physical likeness to the Emperor of the French. In all probability, however, the man was a swindler, or a partial imbecile; and on the whole we are more inclined to regard him as the former, as one who was endeavouring to turn a chance resemblance to account. His attempts to get a share of Countess Kiel-

[3] This occurred on December 25, 1820.

COUNTESS KIELMANSEGG
After a painting by Grassi

mansegg's estate, or to secure an allowance from the French Government, were fruitless. He committed suicide in the year 1864.

But as it was, legends gathered round the personality of the strange woman who had lived for thirty years in the gloomy house in the Plauensche Grund, near Dresden.[4] The most blood-curdling stories were rife concerning the so-called "water palace" where the walls of the park were washed by the torrential waters of the Weisseritz. It was said that the lady who had lived there was a wicked countess abandoned by all the world, plagued by an evil conscience, a prey to unceasing mental conflicts, and obstinately refusing all consolation. But the house did not remain standing to inspire terror very long, having been demolished in the year 1890.

No doubt there was some warrant for these legends, for Countess von Kielmansegg lived a life so secluded as to conflict with all the ordinary ways of human society; and people are wont (especialy if they be Saxons), to spin mysterious yarns about anyone who does not live exactly like his neighbours. The Countess made a cult of Napoleon, a cult so extravagant that it naturally furnished material for a wonderful romance. Her house beside the Weisseritz was stuffed full of all kinds of relics of the Emperor of the French. Pictures of him adorned the walls. Almost every article of furniture in the place was a memorial of him or his time. Among the numberless pictures of Napoleon and his relatives with which Countess von Kielmansegg loved to surround herself, was a miniature in an exquisite frame, on the reverse of which were written the words: "J'ai reçu ce portrait de l'Empereur Napoléon lui-même en 1813." Her veneration for the great man went so far that she treasured up, not only a lock of his hair, but even splinters of wood from the floor of his study in the Marcolini Palace, an old bell-pull, a chimney ornament, stoves, a bed-screen—all articles from the before-mentioned palace, in which she had stayed in the year 1813. She was a fanatical venerator of the Napoleonic grandeurs. August 15th,

[4] She moved into this houst in the year 1833.

Napoleon's birthday, was celebrated by her as conscientiously as May 5th, the day of his death. Year by year, on both of these days, she adorned his pictures with flowers and garlands, shedding tears to his memory as if he had been personally endeared to her. Naturally these peculiarities aroused the strangest fancies in the minds of the common people, who heard the gossip from the Countess's servants; especially since it was known that during the years 1818 and 1819 she had done her best to further a scheme for his escape from St. Helena—a scheme which naturally came to nothing. During his exile in St. Helena, Napoleon had a true friend in Countess Charlotte von Kielmansegg, although he may never nave known it. She would certainly have made her way to his side had she been able to do so, and would gladly have consoled him in place of his wife. But she was never able to fulfil her ardent wish to join her hero in his imprisonment, and she outlived him by more than forty years, for she did not pass away until April 29, 1863. "Seul et soumise" was her motto during the last years of her life. What spiritual conflicts are voiced in these few words!

The most vivid account of this woman who was such a strange combination of opposites has come down to us from Hans Blum, son of Robert Blum, the famous democrat who was shot during the disturbances of the year 1848. Hans Blum visited Countess Kielmansegg in the company of his widowed mother in the year 1849. "I shall never forget the impression which the Countess's appearance made on me. Never before had I seen so aristocratic a form clad in so soiled and plebeian a dress—or, to speak after the manner of the aesthetes, never had I seen so perfect an idea clad in so conflicting a form! Countess Kielmansegg was already a grey-headed woman, but she had continued to carry her head high throughout the storms which had broken across Europe through more than two generations, and to which she personally had often been exposed. She stood there like a monument of those earlier days, tall and slender, self-assured in the consciousness of her immaculately aristocratic savoir

faire. Her delicately moulded and regular features still showed the last traces of that celebrated beauty on which the first Napoleon is said to have once looked with admiration. Could these unemotional, cold, blue eyes, these harsh, marble features, really conceal that inner fire which was shown forth so vividly in the letters to my mother? If so, she must either have had an extraordinary power of controlling the mirror of her soul; or else she was one of those characters rare even among men, one of those whose every gesture, every word, every action, bears the stamp of an inward necessity; one of those whose every inch is a will, a character! one of those who, therefore, seem to ordinary mortals to be endowed with impenetrable coldness and heartlessness. But when, as rarely happened, the sleeping fires broke through their wrappings, her countenance grew terrifying. Just as a hidden crater may suddenly deluge a peaceful countryside with streams of lava, when the inner forces break loose, so over these usually motionless muscles would flit a fierce elemental fire, a convulsive twitching, which would suddenly stiffen once more to a sovereign smile."

Does not this characterization remind us of Napoleon? Was not Countess Kielmansegg like him in temperament? Can we be surprised that she, so closely akin to him venerated him as she did?

EPILOGUE IN ST. HELENA

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BETSY BALCOMBE

For many years the inhabitants of St. Helena had lived in perfect tranquillity and seclusion, when suddenly, in the autumn of the year 1815, news reached the little island that Napoleon Bonaparte, sometime Emperor of the French and ruler of half the world, was to spend the rest of his life in St. Helena as a prisoner of State. All the inhabitants were breathless with excitement until the day came when the "Northumberland," with the distinguished captive on board, cast anchor in Jamestown harbour.

It was difficult for the Emperor, to whom the English would only accord the unpretentious title of "General Bonaparte," to find a suitable habitation. The island was barren and rocky, and there were very few parts of it suited for human settlement. Among the few dwellings fitted for the reception of the most brilliant man of his day, the man who had been used to living in the most splendid royal palaces, the only satisfactory one was Plantation House, the residence of the governor of the British East India Company. This was a large and roomy edifice in the most favourable spot on the island, which nature and art combined had transformed into a paradise. All the distinguished persons who landed on St. Helena for a time, on their way to or from India, were quartered in the governor's delightful mansion; but the British Government had no place for Napoleon Bonaparte there. The dangerous Corsican must have a safer prison, so that he should have no chance of making his way home across the ocean, and appearing once more among his people in Paris!

Longwood seemed the best house for him. It was situated in that part of the island which was easiest to watch. It was impossible for the prisoner to escape seaward, for the cliffs in the neighbourhood could not

be scaled without great difficulty, and there was no place for a landing. On this tableland nearly two thousand feet above sea-level, was an old and ruinous house, the property of Colonel Skelton, the acting governor. He usually lived in Jamestown but, occasionally went to Longwood during the summer heats.

This house was assigned as residence to the Emperor and his suite. But it needed to be repaired and enlarged before they could settle in the place. It was two days before a temporary residence could be found for the prisoner. At length, on October 17th, Napoleon landed, and passed the night in the house of a Mr. Porteous, botanist to the East India Company. The whole population of St. Helena had assembled to stare at the strange visitor, but they did not welcome him with cheers or any similar demonstration. Silently, as if under a spell, they gazed at the man who for fifteen years had held the fate of Europe in his hands. Now a lonely exile, robbed of power and glory, he got out of the boat, accompanied by General Bertrand and Admiral Cockburn, to set foot on the little scrap of land where he was to pass the rest of his days. It was already growing dark, and, enveloped as he was in his surtout, few had the good fortune to catch a glance of the fallen titan's face.

Next morning, very early, Napoleon rode out to see his future dwelling. He was pleased with the situation, especially because Longwood was so inaccessible, and he would be free there from the gaze of the curious whose inquistiveness had annoyed him so much when he landed. He was in good spirits as he rode back to Jamestown. On the way he caught sight of a small country house, bowered in greenery. This was The Briars, the residence of an English trader named Balcombe. The place looked so charming that it occurred to the Emperor that he would like to stay there until Longwood was ready for his reception. He decided to call there at once and have a talk with the owner.

Balcombe was a good-natured fellow and was greatly honoured by the Emperor's visit. It appeared that close beside the dwelling-house, in the garden, there was a

marquee where Napoleon could stay for a few weeks. No sooner said than done. Everything was made ready for the Emperor as speedily as possible. Napoleon's residence was anything but a palace. The marquee was divided into two compartments, the inner of which formed the Emperor's bedroom. All the same, it was so genial a spot that even an emperor could put up with the defects. As a young general on active service, Napoleon, though he had sometimes had much finer quarters, had often had much worse ones.

The Briars was built after the style of an Indian bungalow. It was a little Eden, an oasis amid the great rocky desert. A lovely avenue of banyan-trees led up to the dwelling-house, and either side was flanked by evergreens and gigantic lacos, interspersed with pomegranate and myrtle, and a profusion of large white roses. A walk shaded by pomegranate-trees, thirty to forty feet high, led to the garden. There was, indeed, a wonderful intermingling of tropical and European flora. Oranges, lemons, figs, vines, shaddocks, guavas, and mangoes, throve there in abundance. This garden was Napoleon's favourite haunt during his stay at The Briars.

But there was another attraction for the lonely prisoner. Balcombe had four children, two daughters and and two sons, their respective ages being sixteen, fourteen, seven, and five. The fourteen-year-old was a girl named Betsy, a merry rogue with fair hair and blue eyes. Though still a child in demeanour, she was already bordering on womanhood. Napoleon took great delight in her. But he had to woo her favour, for until she made the Emperor's personal acquaintance she had heard nothing but bad of him. She was terror-stricken when the news of his coming to the island first reached her father's house. Her mind was full of dreadful pictures of him. After the manner of a child, she had represented Napoleon to herself as a monster, a cannibal creature with huge tusks. Very likely he had been used as a sort of bogey man to scare her when she was naughty or idle. As she had grown older, she had naturally come to take more sensible views about the outward aspect of the

Emperor of the French; but he was still an alarming figure to her imagination. And she did not cease to be afraid of the thought of him until the day when, accompanied by Admiral Cockburn and his suite, Napoleon first visited The Briars. The English in general were accustomed to regard Napoleon as an arch-criminal, and it was natural that the girl should share the opinion of her elders.

We need not be surprised, then, to learn that Betsy Balcombe encountered this dread creature with fear and trembling. Her first thought was to run away, when the little troop of riders with Napoleon in their midst came down the path leading to her father's house. But her mother forbade her to escape, for Betsy and her sister were the only two of the family who had a few words of French, and they were needed as interpreters.

Betsy's first impression of the Emperor of the French was enough to dispel her bad opinion of him. Her childish anxiety was tempered with astonishment when she saw him riding up, mounted on a fine black horse, looking like a real ruler of the world. He was always far more majestic on horseback! The girl's eyes were impressed, too, by the simple and tasteful green uniform; by the orders set in diamonds; above all by the saddle and housings, which were of crimson velvet richly embroidered with gold. But when Napoleon dismounted, Betsy was disappointed because he was suprisingly short, so that much of the dignity he had had while in the saddle seemed to have vanished. She was delighted, however, with the Emperor's finely moulded features, although his deadly pallor and the stern immobility of his face seemed rather chilling to her. Then, when he began to speak, his "fascinating smile and kind manner removed every trace of fear."

It was not long before Napoleon turned to speak to her, doing so in the way strangers are apt to speak to young people—asking them to show off their knowledge. The Emperor could think of nothing better than to put Betsy through her paces in geography. He asked her the names of the capitals of the various countries of

Europe—doing this while the whole company sat round the pair on the lawn in front of The Briars. Betsy answered to his satisfaction. But when he asked the name of the capital of Russia, and she briskly replied: "St. Petersburg now; Moscow formerly," he turned abruptly round, and fixing his piercing eyes full on her face, demanded sternly:

"Qui l'a brûlé? "

Once more Betsy was seized with alarm, and was unable to utter a syllable, for she was afraid she would make him angry if she said what she thought. Then he repeated his question, and the girl stammered: "I do not know, Sir." Napoleon laughed heartily, and said:

"Oui oui, vous savez très bien, c'est moi qui l'a brûlé."

Seeing that he was in a good humour, Betsy recovered her composure, and boldly rejoined:

"I believe, Sir, that the Russians burned it to get rid of the French."

He laughed again, and seemed pleased that Betsy knew anything of the matter. A friendship between the pair had been struck up.

That very day the Emperor moved into his temporary quarters. Since he had very little to do, he took more notice of Betsy than he probably would have done in other circumstances. Her fresh youth and her high spirits were a pleasant distraction. Betsy soon lost her fear of the great man, and came to treat him with no more respect than if he had been a schoolfellow of her own age. The Emperor had great times talking to this hoyden, who often embarrassed him by her droll and at times awkward questions. In youthful thoughtlessness, and perhaps also in the conviction that she was a privileged person, Betsy would sometimes turn the conversation to matters painful to the Emperor. For instance, offhand she would ask him about some of the cruel actions that were ascribed to him, such as the slaughter of the Turkish prisoners at Jaffa, the poisoning of the plague patients in the same town, and the execution of the Duke of Enghien. He always stood her fire without retreat, and answered her every question.

No one could tolerate childish liberties better than Napoleon. He shared in all Betsy's jokes, was ready for every possible game or piece of extravagance, for, despite all that had happened to him, he still retained a considerable share of youthful merriment. Though Betsy must have often tried his patience a good deal, he never lost his temper, never stood upon his dignity in respect of rank or age in order to protect himself from her. Indeed, he actually insisted that she was to treat him as her equal. If, as sometimes happened, Betsy made a praiseworthy attempt to be more respectful in manner, he would chaff her, saying:

"Eh bien, qu'as-tu, Mademoiselle Betsee? Has le petit Las Cases proved inconstant? If he have, bring him to me."

The girl could not bear him to say this. She had no interest in boys of fourteen, and least of all did she wish the shy son of Count Las Cases to be her admirer. The Emperor was not slow to realize that this was her weak spot; but the more he tried to play upon it, the more vicious were her tricks in return. It was nothing to Betsy that he was the Emperor; he must be ready to play with her or to talk to her whenever the fancy seized her. Napoleon let her have her way with him, to the great annoyance of Las Cases, a pedant, a slave to ceremonial, who was not merely devoted to his master, but looked upon the Emperor as a person standing far above common mortals.

Besides, Betsy had no difficulty in associating with Napoleon whenever she pleased. He spent most of his time in the garden, using the marquee only for sleeping. His favourite spot was a rose-covered arbour close to which was a cataract, the roar of whose cool and sparkling waters made the sultriest day seem less oppressive. Here he would spend hour after hour talking to Las Cases, dictating part of his memoirs, or working there alone. But these consecrated hours were often broken in upon by the tomboy Betsy, who respected nothing. If she found the door locked, she would knock at it until the Emperor weakened and let her in. He was never

safe from her. If he were sealing a letter, she would jog his elbow so that he would scorch his fingers with the hot sealing wax. If he ignored her presence, and went on with his work, she would snatch his papers from the table and run away with them, crying out: "Now I shall learn all your secrets."

What on earth was he to do with this mad girl? He might pretend to be a little put out, but was never really angry. He ran after her, and took his revenge some other time by pilfering a new ball dress which she had shown him with great pride. He would not give it back to her until the very last moment, so that she had spent the whole night and day in great distress lest she should not, after all, be able to go to the governor's ball—the first to which she had been invited.

She took great delight in introducing ladies of her acquaintance to her distinguished friend. Since she knew perfectly well that he did not care for any but beautiful and amiable women, she made a point of bringing the most ill-favoured of her acquaintances to see him. Of course she had always assured him beforehand that she was going to present a miracle of beauty to him. Time after time Napoleon fell into the trap, and time after time he was disappointed and vexed—to the joy of the naughty little Betsy. Then, as only punishment, he would pinch her ear, saying: "Oh, little monkey"—pronouncing the words abominably, since he had no talent for languages. Still, at this time he was trying hard to master the difficulties of English, Betsy, or more often her sister Jane, playing teacher.

Thus did they go on teasing one another till the day drew near when Napoleon was to leave The Briars. Longwood had been made ready, and on December 10th the Emperor would enter his new residence. Betsy idolized her friend, although she loved to play pranks on him. She was intensely sorrowful at the thought of losing him, and wept bitter tears when they parted. Napoleon tried to console her by promising her that she should often come to see him at Longwood.

The whole Balcombe family was sorry to lose Napoleon.

He had endeared himself to them all by his amiable demeanour, and by his unfailing courtesy. For him, too, the stay at The Briars was the happiest period during the six years he spent on St. Helena.

For a while, Betsy was able to visit Napoleon as often as she pleased. But when Sir Hudson Lowe came to the island as governor and as Napoleon's gaoler, the prisoner was kept under stricter supervision. Sentries were posted in a ring all round Longwood, with orders to prevent access to the Emperor. Even Betsy suffered from this prohibition, although she could elude it more easily than others. Her father supplied the imperial table with provisions, and the members of the Balcombe family were therefore among those who had business relationships with the prisoner's house.

Nevertheless, the happy days of The Briars were over for Betsy as well as for Napoleon. She visited him fairly often, and was sometimes invited to stay for a meal; but the salt had lost its savour, for Napoleon at Longwood was surrounded by his suite, whose members watched jealously to see that the Emperor should not bestow his favours on unworthy persons. Besides, a good many of those in the Emperor's entourage looked upon Betsy, the "saucy girl," with disfavour. It seemed to them that Napoleon was too much interested in her, especially now that she was growing up into a charming young woman.

General Gourgaud's diary shows that Napoleon must indeed have had a great deal of interest in Betsy. For a time, hardly a day passed in which the girl or something connected with her found no mention. It seems that Napoleon was considerably disquieted by Betsy's flirtations with the officers of the English garrison. She was not constant in her affections, taking up now with one, now with another. Napoleon was genuinely distressed by this. When her first admirer, Colonel Reade, appeared, and Betsy walked arm-in-arm with him, the Emperor was so much annoyed that he did not trouble to conceal his vexation. Reade was succeeded by a second admirer in the person of Major Ferzen; and the report

was current in the island that Ferzen intended to make Betsy Balcombe his wife.

Napoleon was in a terrible rage, and he broke out into such explosions of wrath against Betsy and her family that he was manifestly jealous. On one occasion, when the matter came up in conversation, he said: "The Balcombes are not people of family; ils sont de la pure canaille. . . . The major will never marry Betsy; he is not such a fool as to demean himself in that way. They are a miserable lot."

Gourgaud thinks that there were no grounds for the Emperor's suspicions. Like so many others, Ferzen was merely flirting with the pretty girl, and had no thought of marriage. In his jealousy, Napoleon had let his fancy run riot.

"Towards seven o'clock," writes Gourgaud in his diary, under date February 12, 1817, "Bertrand came to see me. He had just left the Emperor, and was in a cheerful mood. The two Misses Balcombe are with him; he speaks a great deal to me about Betsy. . . . Towards nine o'clock I am told that the Emperor is at table. I go to see him. His Majesty asks me if I have been asleep. I answered that I had been with the ladies at the Grand Marshal's. His Majesty begs me to bring them. I bring them to him. Their naïvety amazes us all very much. They always address the Emperor as 'Monsieur,' which cheers the Emperor up. We go into the drawing-room, where Betsy plays the fool.

"Thursday, February 13th. I lunch with Bertrand and the Balcombes. There is talk about the likelihood of Betsy's marrying Mr. Reade. I play with the little madcap, but at one o'clock return to my dwelling and set to work. . . . From afar off I see Mr. Reade with his sweetheart, whom he has taken out for a walk. They are arm-in-arm.

"The Emperor, and subsequently Ferzen, visit Madame Bertrand. Betsy is turning the whole place upside-down.

"Towards seven o'clock His Majesty summons me to the drawing-room. He is extremely melancholy and depressed. He talks of playing a game of chess, but gives

up the idea, being too much wrapped up in thought. Supper passes off gloomily. The Emperor asks if the Balcombes are coming, and Montholon answers: 'Your Majesty has asked them to come.'

"We go into the drawing-room, where the two young ladies and the Grand Marshal are awaiting us. His Majesty tells Madame de Montholon to aks them to lunch tomorrow, but the Balcombes refuse. The Emperor looks very unhappy. He talks for a minute to Betsy, and then goes with Bertrand into the other room and talks to him alone for a long time. At ten o'clock he retires. I accompany the ladies back to Bertrand's. The sentries stop us.

"Friday, February 14th. The two Misses Balcombe take lunch with the Grand Marshal. Their father and Ferzen are there too, and Betsy is extremely gracious to the latter. Poor Reade! Ferzen is very amiable to me, and invites me to go out shooting with him. He thinks that the Emperor is greatly changed. . . .

"July 8, 1817. It is a good thing for Ferzen that he is going away, for if he had stayed he would probably be mad enough to marry Betsy. The Emperor thinks this ridiculous, and says: 'Betsy is a girl just like any other. Besides, life is so short, and what are women for except to bring children into the world?' "

This was not the first time on which Napoleon had expressed himself as adverse to a matrimonial scheme for Betsy Balcombe. The previous occasion had been when General Gourgaud declared himself an admirer of the young lady.

But the Emperor, had no reason to be jealous on that occasion either, for Betsy could not bear General Gourgaud, and the latter himself could make no headway with her. "The Emperor," writes Gourgaud, "envies me for having been so happy as to see Betsy. He believed that I was going to have supper with the young girl. I answered, however, that I had not come to St. Helena for the sake of Miss Balcombe, and that I should never give the preference to anyone else's invitation over the Emperor's." We may be doubtful whether this answer appeased the jealous Napoleon. He was never easy in

his mind when the young girl was in any other man's company, whether that of a Frenchman or that of an Englishman. He thought she was safest when she was with Madame Bertrand, who, on Napoleon's instructions, saw a great deal of the two sisters, and to some extent supervised their education. Betsy and her sister Jane would therefore spend whole days at the Grand Marshal's house. Then, at any rate, Betsy was not very far from Napoleon. He could talk to the members of his suite about her, even though, in default of a special permit from Sir Hudson Lowe, she could not visit him. The supervision had now become even stricter. Sometimes however, Napoleon would call on Madame Bertrand when the Misses Balcombe were visiting that lady. He could therefore still meet Betsy from time to time. He would play billiards or cards with her, or would get her to read aloud to him, usually from the English newspapers, which she would translate to him in her halting French. Their conversations would sometimes take the quaintest turns, the Emperor being now and then driven into a corner by Betsy's penetrating questions. For example, on one occasion she suddenly asked him: "Pourquoi avez-vous tourné turque?" She had been told that when he was commander-in-chief in Egypt, he had become a Mohammedan! Certainly this young girl had it in her power to cheer up the lonely prisoner for a time.

After a while Miss Balcombe became somewhat more serious-minded, so that the Emperor had less reason to be jealous on account of her flirtations. But she was not to enjoy the great man's friendship much longer.

The intimate relationships between Napoleon and the Balcombe family had long been a thorn in the side of the British Government, and in especial in that of Sir Hudson Lowe. When, at length, it transpired that the Emperor and some of the members of his suite had been sending letters to Europe through the instrumentality of Betsy's father, the Balcombes became seriously suspect. Their position on the island was imperilled. Furthermore, Mrs. Balcombe had fallen sick, and was ordered

a change of climate. On March 18, 1818, the whole family set sail for England.

When, a few days before sailing, Betsy came to say farewell to her distinguished friend, she was deeply distressed at the prospect of parting. She wept bitterly, and Napoleon, too, seemed unhappy. After she had gone, his loneliness became complete. Her sunny presence had given him a sense of warm companionship. Now his loneliness seemed all the more intense—a loneliness that lasted until, three years later, he was delivered from it by death.

Only the broad outlines of Betsy Balcombe's subsequent career are known to us. It seems that her father was forbidden to return to St. Helena. But the Prince Regent (whose natural son some people believed him to be) seems to have been his patron, and thanks to this he was oppointed treasurer in New South Wales, where, however, he died prematurely. When his family returned to England, Betsy married a gentleman named Abell, was widowed ere long, and subsequently, during the days of her widowhood, wrote her memories of life in St. Helena and her association with the great Napoleon. The book was published in 1843.

The surviving members of the Napoleon family, and especially Napoleon III, showed their gratitude to Betsy Balcombe for having helped to make Napoleon the Great happy during part of the last years of his life. Napoleon III presented her with large estates in Algeria, and in various other ways showed favour to her and her only daughter.

Betsy Balcombe survived the fall of the Second Empire, dying in London in the year 1873.

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